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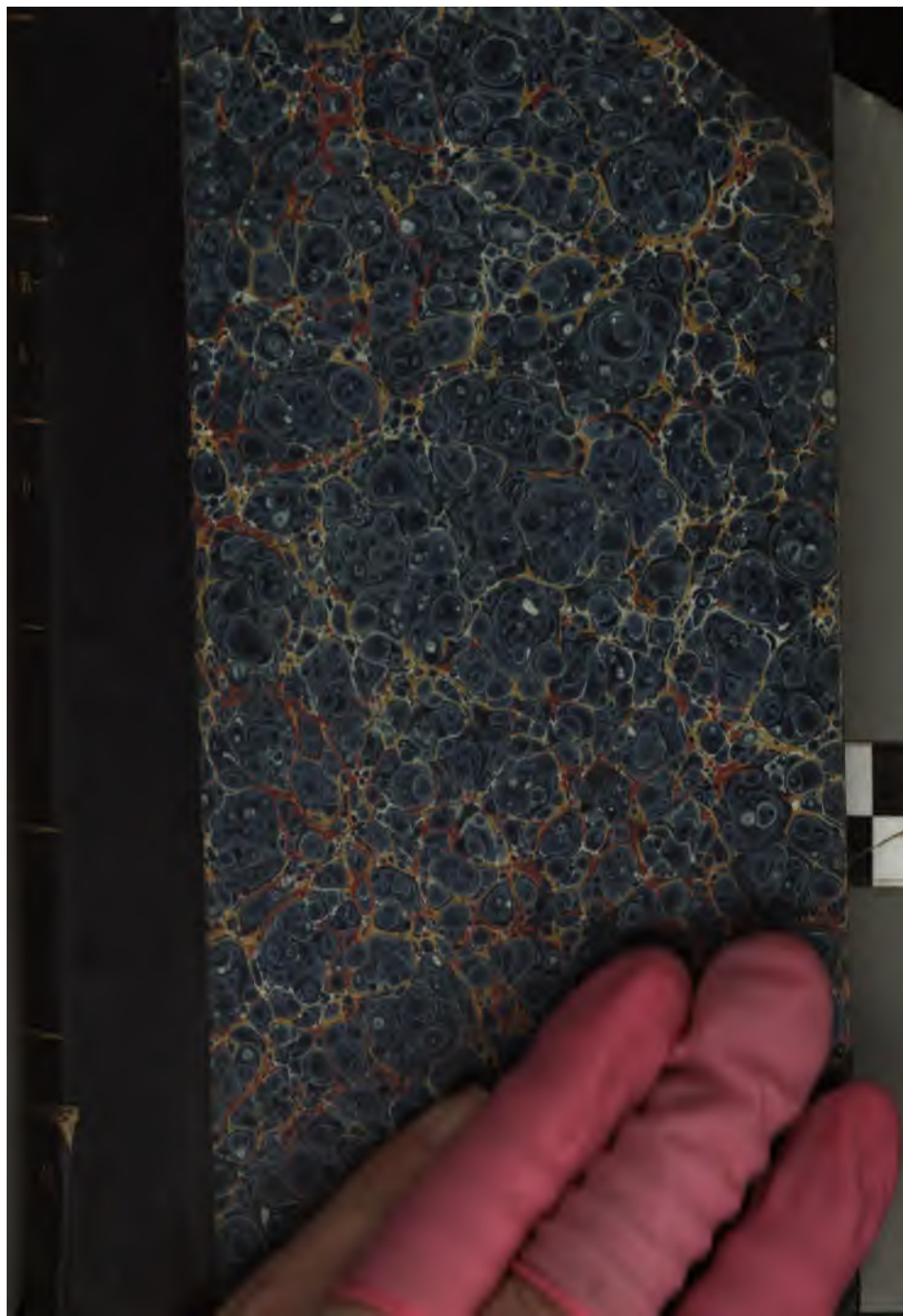
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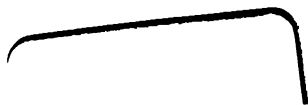
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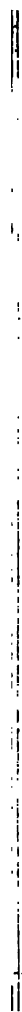
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# ROBERTINA.



A NOVEL.

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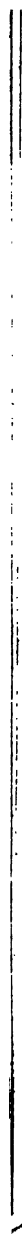
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# ROBERTINA;

OR,

## THE SACRED DEPOSIT.

A Novel.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BY

CATHERINE G. WARD,

*AUTHOR OF THE DAUGHTER OF ST. OMER, THE BACHELOR;  
HEIRESS, MY NATIVE LAND, THE SON AND  
THE NEPHEW, &c. &c.*

---

Oh, memory! thou fond deceiver,  
Still importunate and vain;  
To former joys recurring ever,  
And turning all the past to pain—  
Thou, like the world, th' oppress'd oppressing,  
Thy smiles increase the wretch's woe,  
And she who wants each other blessing,  
In thee must ever find a foe.      GOLDSMITH.

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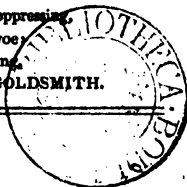
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## DEDICATION.

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TO THE UNKNOWN ———

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**T**O you, though unknown, the following pages are simply dedicated; but why are they dedicated to you? Because the graces that attend you wreath not roses round your brow for the adornment of your person—they have taught you to erect your Temple of Charity; but where, madam—tell me where? Not in the “Morning Herald,” that emblazons your name with public donations—No! they have taught you a superior mode of bestowing benefits on your fellow-creatures; for the Fame you build upon is your own Conscience, and the Temple of Charity you erect is in the Human Heart!

VOL. I.

B

Shall

Shall I emblazon your worth by eulogy? Shall volumes swell your praise? No, madam! The anguished heart, from which you so oft have removed the load of care—the tearful eye, which you so oft have dried—let these, these speak where language is denied!

Like the violet of the lowly vale, you shelter those virtues, whose retiring modesty creates a charm more sweetly fragrant than the flower which obtrudes itself on our gaze—the rose is seen, but the violet will be sought after!

I have the honour to be, madam, what time has strengthened, and experience has taught me to know, without flattery, your friend, and too grateful ever to be your enemy,

CATHERINE G. WARD.

August 6, 1817.

# ROBERTINA.

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## CHAPTER I.

---

Oh, memory! thou fond deceiver,  
Still importunate and vain;  
To former joys recurring ever,  
And turning all the past to pain—  
Thou, like the world, th' oppress'd oppressing,  
Thy smiles increase the wretches' woe;  
And she who wants each other blessing,  
In thee must ever find a foe.      GOLDSMITH.

**O**N the borders of Northumberland,  
not many miles distant from the city of  
Durham, stood what once had been the  
beautiful and splendid ruins of an an-  
cient castle, the possessors of which, like

the gay trophies which had adorned their magnificent tombs, had long since mingled with the mouldering dust; not a vestige remained that could give historians a page to mark the annals of the illustrious great ones, whose bones now rested with the mass of earth that covered the ashes of their inferiors.

Of all the ancient barons of Winterside, there was but one who had given to posterity any issue; and from him descended the present heir to the castle, whose lofty turrets, though they no longer exhibited ancient grandeur, produced a more novel effect on the mind of the beholder; for being modernized according to the present fashion, it resembled the workmanship of a show-box more than the awfully grand and sublime structure, which once contained no pampered sons of luxury, whose heads alone reposed on beds of down, but hardy chieftains, whose bold achievements had rendered them victorious in  
the

the field, bearing to their native land the green laurel, which, to the end of never-fading time, blossoms to the memory of a gallant soldier!

Those who had formerly known the baron at the celebration of the splendid festival given in commemoration of his nuptials with the heiress of Montalbin, would not, at the period at which this history commences, have recognized, in his wasted form and emaciated countenance, the handsome and animated features of the once-blooming Valentine; whose disposition, mind, and manners, had likewise undergone a melancholy change in a series of seventeen years—a change, which the oldest of his domestics could not witness without deeply lamenting the cause—a mystery they were not permitted to reveal, on pain of forfeiting their allegiance to their beloved master, and over which, though oblivion had seemed to cast a veil, yet the thorny recollection of past sorrows



was still fresh in the remembrance of the baron. For him no Lethe poured her balmy cup of forgetfulness; nor could the hand of time itself remove the mystic veil, which, having bound his senses in a fatal spell, had led him to the commission of an act, for which the miserable state of his present feelings was now paying the forfeiture. Yet were his lips in holy silence sealed—except only in the murmurings of a broken slumber he once whispered the name of Augusta, and sunk again to the wanderings of a delusive dream.

Adam Oldstaff was the chief attendant of the baron; yet departing sometimes from the unvaried gentleness with which he usually addressed him, he was doomed, as well as the rest of the domestics, to experience the irritability of his master's unhappy malady; all of which Adam endured with a forbearance that could not but endear him to an object less sensitive than the baron, in whom  
sensibility

sensibility still powerfully operated: and well did Adam Oldstaff know the time, the season, and the place, to awaken those feelings most likely to effect his purpose, when humanity called for the aid of benevolent exertion; then would he step forward in the cause of the unfortunate, and boldly ask relief—nor was the boon solicited ever yet denied.

There was one grand and universal order, however, long established in the ancient family of the Wintersides, which the baron, conformable to the will of his ancestors, had ever kept in force—That a pilgrim journeying to the Holy Land, or a weary traveller benighted, should on no occasion whatever be denied admission to the castle, nor turned forth to wander, until the calls of appetite were sufficed, and rest procured by seven hours' repose, when they were again set forwards on their pilgrimage with alms and prayers of the holy priests, to help them on their way. This had

never once faded on the recollection of the baron, more than two hundred personages having been entertained at the castle since he had become the possessor.

But within the last seventeen years, the order for the admission of females had been strongly prohibited, no one daring to give entrance to a female, on the forfeiture of their immediate dismissal from the service of the family : imperious the motive, and as imperious the necessity, which compelled the baron to issue a command, against which the feelings of humanity revolted ; and he was severely censured for a conduct that appeared unmanly towards a sex, whose tender and defenceless nature called for that protection which Providence ordained from the beginning of created universe.

Whether he had always acted consistently with such claims need not be inquired into—let the unprincipled libertine

tine ask his own heart, and the practised deceiver his own conscience.

The baron was absolute—Adam Oldstaff murmured, but dared not disobey; and the gates which humanity unclosed to relieve the wants of man were barred against those of woman—the eye that was bedewed with pity for him shed no tear for her; and to feel compassion for a female was a sort of negative virtue in the baron, which he did not experience himself, and therefore could not allow of it in others.

In the deep shades of retirement, pent up in close and profound study, and almost constantly employed in philosophical researches, the baron, habituated to solitude, became not only a recluse but a severe censurist: he remembered not the garden of Eden in which he had once lived, and had gathered the most blooming sweets—he had forgot the fragrance of the soft-scented rose, and felt only the thorns

which embosoms its leaves; if he dwelt on the past, it was with the bitterest recollections—if on the present, with no pleasurable sensations; but on the future he paused—a feeling sprung from his heart spontaneously—he could not repel its force—it whispered the name of Augusta, and the baron searched for it in the book of philosophy; he could not find it there—it was written in the book of nature, and volumes could not erase it from his memory, nor blot the sacred page which illustrated its worth.

## CHAPTER II.

~~~~~

IT was one of those nights, in the gloomy month of November, when the warring elements, contending with each other, spent their fury on the unsheltered head of many  
a weary

a weary traveller, while the wretched out-cast in vain sought a refuge from the storm—the straw-built shed was closely barred against his entrance, and the thatched cottage sent forth a glimmering light, whose feeble rays but bewildered his benighted footsteps—all was dark and comfortless, and the castle-bell had just responded the hour of twelve, when Adam Oldstaff, having left the baron to repose, lighted his lamp, and was preparing also to retire, when the increased violence of the storm made him instinctively pause before he proceeded to his chamber, and he compassionately reflected on the situation of many of his fellow-creatures, who might, at such a moment, be exposed to its resistless fury.

The heart of Adam floated in the milk of human kindness; and, as the good old man slowly measured back his footsteps to his own comfortable chamber, he heaved a sigh, responsive to the

hollow blasts of wind which shook the windows of his apartment, and he murmured a prayer to Omnipotence, that every human being might that night, like himself, be preserved from the desolating tempest. With a wish so pious, and a prayer so fervent, he gently sunk to that repose which conscience alone can render unalloyed, and from which he was only disturbed by hearing, as he imagined, a loud ringing at the castle-gate, accompanied by the mournful accents of distress, which, in low broken murmurs, faintly and repeatedly implored admission. It was a soft and a tenderly-plaintive voice, and, as it plainly indicated to be the voice of a female, Adam Oldstaff shuddered, and stood aghast, the unnatural and dreadful prohibition, never to grant protection to a female, withholding his ever-ready hand to assist the unfortunate. What was to be done? To awaken the baron was madness—to intercede for a woman, folly;

ly; yet, as the noise became every moment more clamorous, and the cries of the supplicant more plaintive, he determined, at least, to put on his clothes, and go down to the castle-gate; there were no laws against making inquiries, and he resolved, if he could render the unfortunate any assistance on the outside of the gate, that he would exert the utmost of his power; and hastily snatching up a bottle of wine, which had been only uncorked the preceding day for the charitable purpose of administering its contents to a sick neighbour, with the alacrity of nimble-footed youth he hastened to the spot from whence had issued the mournful accents of distress.

“Who art thou?” cried the old man, softening his voice compassionately as he spoke—“who art thou, who at this late hour art doomed to wander in the midnight storm? Speak, and answer quickly, whether male or female, and what thou art in quest of?”

With



With these words Adam Oldstaff half-unclosed the little gate which stood at the entrance of the portal, and in the same moment that his eyes rested on the figure of a female, she uttered, with piercing expression—"I seek protection!" and sunk almost powerless against the chain that still opposed her entrance there.

It was not so much the exterior of the mournful pleader, or the plaintive sweetness of the voice which addressed him, that altogether attracted the attention of Adam Oldstaff towards her, and which made him promptly, but tenderly, reply — "Protection! alas! poor thing! I cannot give it to thee;" but it was the expression, the countenance of the stranger, so strongly resembling features he had once seen, that made him gaze with symptoms of curiosity.—"In any form but *that*," continued the old man, surveying her with pity, "I could indeed afford thee protection;

tection; but thou art a woman, and therefore art denied protection here."

"Because I am a woman!" repeated she, as she raised her eyes; "from whom proceeds so cruel a prohibition?"

"From one whom I am bound to serve, and serving I obey—my lord and master," returned Adam, with firmness.

"Then let me seek it *where* it cannot be denied," uttered she—"The ravens feed—the lilies of the valley they are clothed—and he who caters for the sparrow, will he not protect me too? Farewell, old man—you are merciless, but Heaven is just!"

At these words, so emphatically pronounced, the stranger bowed her head; and hastily drawing from beneath her mantle a curious folded bundle, she held it out to Adam. A convulsive tremor shook her whole frame—her eyes rested a moment on the bundle—she sighed deeply, and repeated the following words—"Old man, you have now a charge,

to

to which, if you do not grant protection, there is no mercy for thee in *heaven*—no peace on *earth*!”

Adam Oldstaff grasped the bundle which the forlorn and agitated female had forced into his hands, and repeating her mysterious words, closed the grating that shut her out for ever with a heavy heart; but the performance of his duty, and his sworn allegiance to his beloved master, forbade him to murmur at an act of cruelty, over which he could only utter deep-drawn sighs; and no sooner did his tottering steps reach his chamber, than he began to unfold the bundle of the miserable suppliant—when astonishment, fear, surprise, hope, and most of all, pity, superseded each other by turns in his aged breast; for, carefully wrapt in several folds of soft flannel, he beheld a sleeping infant, whose age could not exceed nine months!

Adam gazed, trembled, and gazed again—Was it human or divine?

Lost

Lost in amazement, whether to go in quest of some of the domestics, whether to apprize the baron of this discovery, or in what manner he should next apply his care of his tender charge, he gently drew a chair close to the warm embers of a wood fire, which were not yet quite extinguished, and began more minutely to examine the outward covering, which enveloped almost the whole body of the infant, and softly removing it, he perceived a small piece of red cloth pinned on the breast of the child, on which was neatly worked, with white silk, in small and legible characters, the following words—“ *Robertina, a sacred deposit, left in the hands of Providence.*”

Nothing further remained that could give a clue, or could furnish any conjecture whatever, from whose hands so sacred a deposit came.

Adam Oldstaff was puzzled; and the probability that he had seen the mother of the child was instantly admitted into  
his

his mind, and as instantly rejected: could a mother part with her child, and under such circumstances, without the most distant probability of ever beholding it again? The idea was unnatural and cruel: besides, the female he had seen was neither young nor handsome; her features rather bore the marks of deep affliction, and the wild expression of her eyes, which were dark and keenly-penetrating, seemed at once to say—“ I have that within which passeth shew.”

The cries of the helpless little stranger now, for the first time, began to arrest the ear of Adam Oldstaff, and caused him instinctively to start from his recumbent posture, and go in search of the only female domestic which the Castle of Winterside had afforded for the last seventeen years, and this was no less a personage than Mistress Lucretia Timbertop, then on the verge of her sixty-ninth year, who being both old  
and

and ugly, but nevertheless possessing uncommon skill in the management of kitchen affairs, and being likewise of a quiet comfortable disposition, was rendered fully competent, by the baron, for the department she held, and being without rivalry, she was considered the *fuctotum* in the domestic establishment of the family.

It was to her apartment that Adam Oldstaff posted with his tender charge, and with a gentle tap aroused the dormant faculties of Mrs. Lucretia's pious soul, who, in a voice not very soft or melodious, desired to know the cause of such a singular midnight invasion, cursing the squalling of the cats, that had set up so dismal a yell to disturb her.

"Quick! open the door!" vociferated Adam, "for I tell you, in plain truth, Mrs. Lucretia, it is no squalling of a cat, but the cry of a beautiful babe, that disturbs you from your sleep."

"A beautiful babe!" screamed out  
Lucretia;

Lucretia; "the Lord be good unto me! And where did you get such a thing?"

But woman's curiosity was on the utmost stretch—she waited for no reply, but instantly unclosing the door of her bedchamber, received from the arms of Adam the lovely little Robertina, who briefly related to her the whole of his midnight adventure with the unknown female at the castle-gate, consulting with her on the means most prudent to apprise the baron of so singular a discovery.

In the meantime, Lucretia applied the utmost care and attention to the cries of the infant, and by a small spoonful of cordial, administered in some food, with which she presently began to feed it, once more lulled it into a state of forgetfulness; and having laid it in her own warm bed, she returned to Adam, with eyes and hands uplifted, and the following exclamation—"Santa Maria! why, it's a girl! it's a girl, as I hope to be saved!"

saved! How unlucky! if it had been a boy, we might have managed things so differently: now I foresee a pretty picce of work with it—we shall have a nice job of it with the baron, when he finds it's a girl! he'll never come to himself again! What shall us do, master Adam?"

"As Christians ought to do, I think, Mrs. Lucretia," replied Adam, giving the old housekeeper a look at the same moment, which could not be mistaken; "and, as the night is cold," continued he, "and neither of us quite so young as some twenty years ago, what say you to a glass of Canary? I have some that is excellent in my little cabinet, two and forty years old, come next Michaelmas; and if you will do me the favour, Mrs. Lucretia——"

Mrs. Lucretia nodded assent; Adam ran for the Canary; the wood-fire was replenished—the glass went briskly round—Lucretia observed that wonders would never cease—Adam was of opinion



nion there was nothing new under the sun. Some little family secrets were then descanted on, but with great caution. Lucretia shuddered—Adam persisted that a second glass of Canary would do her no harm; further family matters were then discussed, and arrangements formed for the ensuing morning, and plans proposed; in the midst of which the castle-bell responded six.

Lucretia started up to attend to the wants of the little bantling; and Adam, fortifying himself with a third glass of Canary, found himself, in the course of a few minutes, at the door of the baron's chamber; he knocked, and was instantly admitted into the presence of his beloved master.

CHAPTER III.  
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"WHAT brings you hither so early, old Adam?" said the baron, raising his head gently from the pillow; "what is the hour?"

"Seven, please your honour," replied Adam, approaching nearer to the bedside, and exhibiting a countenance in which the baron read the strongest emotion, and he instantly inquired into the cause of an agitation which was so unusual.

"My lord and liege master," replied Adam, with collected firmness, "I have offended against your laws, and I have chosen rather to do that than sin against my Heavenly Father."

Here Adam paused a few moments to observe the alternate changes in the expressive

pressive and fine features of his master, who, in the mildest tone of complacency, desired him to proceed. Adam then began :

“ There was a piteous storm last night, your honour—never did my eyes witness so rude a tempest. The rain fell in torrents, the winds howled, the lightnings flashed, and the thunder roared—I would not have sent forth a dog to have met its fury.”

Adam sighed, and waited a moment to recover his breath.

“ It was indeed a bitter night,” said the baron. “ But pray, my good Adam, what had last night to do with your present feelings ?”

“ Oh, much, your honour,” cried Adam, “ for just as I was about to enjoy the blessing of repose, I was disturbed by a loud knocking at the castle-gate; and instantly repairing hither to know from whence it proceeded, was shocked by the appearance of a wretched female, who  
implored

implored me to grant her my protection."

The countenance of the baron was instantly overcast with an ashy paleness, and in a voice of sternness he inquired of the affrighted Adam if he had dared to admit her?

Adam was obliged to raise his voice, as he pronounced—"No, my lord; I—I dismissed her. She would have melted the heart of a stone; but I was firm as a rock. I would not have preserved her from the fury of the tempest, unless——"

Adam stopped, and the baron interrupted him.

"Unless what?"

"Unless your honour had commanded me," cried Adam, perceiving the baron was growing still more angry. He sighed deeply, put his hand across his forehead, and after a silence had elapsed of a few moments, in which he appeared to have suppressed some strong emotions,

he addressed Adam in a milder tone than before.

“In the strict observance of your duty, and conformable with my commands,” uttered he, “you have acted as becomes a true and faithful servant; how then have you offended against those laws which you have so rigidly performed? Fear nothing; I am satisfied your fidelity cannot be shaken. What have you to apprehend?”

Adam now finding a change he so little expected, proceeded to inform the baron of the sacred deposit committed to his care by the miserable suppliant at the gate, her manner of departing, her mysterious words, and of the singular discovery he had made, when on opening the bundle he had perceived the infant. Adam then produced the little piece of red cloth, which the baron closely examined.—“Robertina!” repeated he, and the hectic of a moment passed his

his cheek—"Robertina!" exclaimed he; and, as if pausing to recollect something, he whispered the name of Robertina a third time, and relapsed into silence. Then, suddenly raising his voice, while strong emotion was visible in every feature—"Robertina!"

"With all due submission to your honour, I think Robertina a very pretty name," observed Adam; "and she is the prettiest little soul——"

Here Adam stopped, as he generally did whenever he perceived any change in the countenance of the baron likely to forbode a threatened storm.

"The brat is a female then?" uttered he, and waited for Adam's reply, not without betraying symptoms of curiosity.

"A beautiful piece of animated wax-work, your honour—such a forehead!—such eyes! and a mouth—By my holy dame, your honour, but that an old man might be pardoned for his foolish conceit, but the little sweetling has a

mouth that I could have sworn might have been your honour's, were not the thing impossible. But come, will your honour see her?"

"Not for the created universe!" thundered the baron, in a voice which completely silenced the rising jocularity of poor Adam Oldstaff. "Let the brat be fed and clothed," said he, "since wayward fate has brought it hither; but no more. See that you look to *that*; but no further. Carry my orders to Lucretia, and depart."

Adam did depart, without a word more being advanced on either side, and not a little glad to escape from what he deemed a drawn battle. He quickly imparted to Lucretia the substance of his conversation with the baron to the confiding ear of the curious Mrs. Lucretia, who exclaimed—"The Virgin preserve us! what vagaries! Not see her forsooth! he might see something worse when the sun shines on the river. But  
no

no matter—it will be a lucky babe, I warrant me. There's a blue spot on her breast, that looks for all the world like a *flower-de-luce*, and that was the coat of arms, I well remember, of one of the ancient barons of this castle—Aye, I do recollect, forty years ago it graced the armorial bearings of sir Werter Winterside, a good and worthy man. He gave abundance to the poor; and when he died, a funeral sermon was not preached in vain over his remains.”

The cries of little Robertina now called the attention of Lucretia from her silent but expressive auditor, and a summons from the bell of the baron's chamber made him hasten to answer the commands of his liege lord and master.

He discovered the baron in profound meditation; and as one hand marked down a page of a book, in which he had been reading, the other held a red morocco case, which contained a miniature of his youngest sister, lady Julia Rosen-



berg, whom he had never beheld since his voluntary seclusion from the world: he had heard, indeed, that she had given her hand to the count of Rosenberg, more in compliance to the arbitrary wishes of the duchess of Blaise, a *married sister*, with whom she lived, than from any avowed attachment of the heart; and as he gazed on the beautiful resemblance of a sister he once adored, the expression of a countenance, which Corregio might have painted for a Madonna, seemed to chide him with his long neglect; and he sighed deeply, on reflection that this lovely creature had been made the sacrifice of ill-placed ambition; and the exclamation of "Poor Julia!" was scarce pronounced, and the tear scarce dry, which had intrusively followed it, when Adam Oldstaff entered the apartment.

"Poor Julia!" repeated the baron, gazing full in Adam's face, who having placed the breakfast-things on the table, retired.

retired to a respectful distance—"Poor Julia!" continued the baron, "I have not forgotten thee! Can the ties of nature be forgotten? No! they are written in its pages; and cold indeed must be that heart who can tear a leaf from so sacred a register! Adam, you remember my sister Julia?"

"Remember her, your honour! Ah! many a time have I seen her, blooming as the fresh rose, playful as the young fawn, mild as the evening star, beautiful as a cherub, smiling on all around her, giving charity and bestowing blessings wherever she came!—Remember lady Julia, your honour! my poor old heart dances with joy when I *do* remember her! And yet it is a strange kind of joy, for I cannot keep my eyes dry for the soul of me." And Adam turned to the window, not to conceal, but to enjoy emotions, which were, in reality, the offspring of a heart without guile, and a sentiment without conceit.

The baron was affected—the chord was touched that vibrated to the soul. He gazed on Adam with more than usual complacency—desired him to place before him his escrutoire, and instantly began a letter to the countess of Rosenberg, the substance of which remains a profound secret, as all secrets are, till they are once told.

It is possible, however, that the baron's mind dwelt with no small degree of perplexity on the strange and mysterious manner in which the little stranger, who now formed a part of his family, had been thrown on his protection; he certainly, at the present moment, did not feel the slightest predilection in its favour, suspecting not only the purity of the female who had so cruelly abandoned it, but also her artful motives in having placed her infant at his door, with an appeal which Christian charity could not repel; nor could indeed his inclination, however prejudiced against the sex, turn  
forth

forth a helpless innocent to encounter a wide and merciless world. But whether the baron communicated these sentiments in his letter to lady Julia Rosenberg cannot be ascertained.

His commands respecting the little foundling being strictly obeyed, the prudent Lucretia discharged her trust, not only from a principle of duty, but from inclination; and Robertina grew like the wild blossomed rose, not on its parent tree, but transplanted to a soil on which the nipping blast and cold winds of adversity were never permitted to blow.

#### CHAPTER IV.

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UNDER the auspices of Mrs. Lucretia Timbertop, and the joint management of Adam Oldstaff, Robertina had nearly completed her seventh year, and the ex-

treme beauty of her delicate little form and face, with a disposition the most arch and lively, rendered her an object almost idolized by the old couple, who often wondered in themselves at the serious injunctions placed on them by the baron, never to bring her into his presence, in the same moment that his anxiety for her welfare was never neglected. During the inoculation of the small-pox, he evinced uncommon agitation to the persons that attended her, as also in many other afflictive disorders which usually visit children in their infancy ; and whenever he was informed by Lucretia that the little girl was again restored to health and beauty, he seemed pleased and satisfied, though he had resisted all the entreaties of the loquacious housekeeper ever to behold her, who was instantly dismissed at the conclusion of her favourite sentence of—"Flesh and blood, your honour, cannot help loving her—such pretty tricks!—such winning

winning ways!—and so handsome!—by my faith, king Charles's beauties were fools to her! Now, if I could but once persuade your honour to——”

“ Begone, officious fool!” was generally the baron's prompt reply to all the arguments of poor Lucretia, which was followed by a flood of tears at the recollection of her imperious master, and which were never so effectually wiped away as when the arms of little Robertina were clasped around her neck, demanding to know the cause of her grief, while, in sweet prattling accents, she would then exclaim—“ Kiss Robin, and be a good girl—don't cry, that's a dear; and when the sun shines, I will go and gather pretty flowers—all for you.”

In this sort of way, Adam and Lucretia were beguiled out of many a sullen fit by the playful Robertina, who, with the tricks of a kitten, possessed the softness of a dove: if corrected, she

would smile, but a tear always followed; to let them see that sensibility was already the inmate of her young heart.

Seven winters had now rolled rapidly away, and the baron had three times visited the gay metropolis, but on his return always appeared unusually dejected. He had now held a regular correspondence with the family of the Rosenbergs, and scarce a day arrived that did not bring a letter from lady Julia, the last of which was as follows:—

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“ I accept your invitation, my beloved Valentine, and have so far prevailed on my lord, as to obtain his promise of accompanying me to Winterside Castle the beginning of the next month.

“ An indescribable pleasure seizes my heart at the bare mention of this wished-for period! I am all impatience and anxiety to behold your little foundling,


Robertina,

Robertina, whom you assure me you have never yet beheld. Can it be seven years, and not behold her?

“ Oh, what a charge was delivered to your hands! how beat the tumults of a mother’s heart, when she parted with this, and probably the first darling of her affections! Oh, my brother! cannot you guess at the palsy which shook a mother’s trembling frame? Who is there who would not feel for her? Do you? Oh yes, my brother! the pulsation of your noble heart is not yet cold nor insensate.

“ But I am strangely wandering—the effects of my nervous malady. I really did not mean to say so much on a subject which you think so lightly of.

“ Apropos! the duke and duchess of Blaise dined with us yesterday. They are just returned from the Brighton *fête*, given in honour of the princess Charlotte’s nuptials with the prince of Saxe-Cobourg. Amiable and accomplished creature!





creature! may her present felicity be bright and never-fading, and the completion of her wishes be ratified in this union of her heart's choice!

“Do you know, Valentine, that the duchess absolutely talks of visiting you also, in your secluded bowers? She is, like myself, not a little curious to see your little nursling; but you know Caroline only talks—she seldom means what she says, unless when she makes us feel the keen edge of her satire.

“Adieu, dear Valentine! I shall long for spring, and hail the first blossomed bud which assures me it is coming with more transport than you can imagine.

“Rosenberg is just come in. He tells me, that writing will spoil my eyes, as if tears, which I have so often shed in torrents, had not done that already. Once more, adieu!

“Your affectionate sister,

“JULIA ROSENBERG.”

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The

The baron paused more than once as he perused and reperused this affectionate proof of a sister's regard, the sincerity of which could not be doubted; and he fell into a deep train of thought at the uncommon manner in which she had introduced the subject of the little foundling. Julia was the soul of sensibility; it was no difficult matter to awaken the tenderest emotions in a heart so affectionate and kind—But Julia had never been a mother; yet had she most feelingly described, and delicately described, a mother's fears—a mother's pangs, at parting with her child.

“It is strange!” thought the baron, as he carefully folded up her letter; “but, Julia, thou art a sensitive creature, and Robertina shall not be the worse for the interest you have taken in her welfare. The girl will be growing up and stand in need of a protectress; so, madam Lucretia, you must give up your charge.

Yes,

Yes, Julia, my sister Julia, shall be a mother to Robertina," thought the baron, as he hastily put on his hat, and strolled down to the banks of a beautiful lake which surrounded his plantations.

It was a morning of transcendent beauty, such a morning as Milton might have been supposed to have composed his *Paradise Lost*. The sun shone with the brightest lustre; the birds poured forth a melody divine; scarce a murmur was heard on the lake but that created by the golden fish that swam upon its surface; while flowers of the most enchanting perfume breathed a fragrance on all around.

Never, since the period of a certain event, which had so fatally disposed the baron to perpetual solitude and deep melancholy, had he held a contemplation so pleasing with himself as on this morning; in which the sweet and interesting character of his sister bore a principal share,  
and

and he anticipated the hour when he should welcome her as a guest at Winter-side Castle with the most heartfelt pleasure.

Not so the idea of her being accompanied by the duke and duchess of Blaise; the former of whom, a silly dotard, the slave of prejudice, and the easy tool of the arbitrary disposition of a still more prejudiced wife. Happy had it been, for the benefit of society, and all domestic happiness, had the exterior of a very fine person been the only advantage this lady possessed; but the powers which nature had given her to please were directed only as shafts to wound; and when she had inflicted the smart, there could not be found, in her whole composition, one atom of a balsamic quality to heal.


The favourite of an old gouty peer, her widowed father had indulged her to an excess which could amount to nothing but dotage. Spirit she possessed,  
but

but it was the spirit of a malignant fury; her beauty was dazzling, but not impressive; and lady Caroline Winterside, while she commanded the homage of a million, in reality could not bind one single captive in her chains; love was a stranger to her bosom—ambition its sole inmate; and five-and-thirty summers passed away before she arrived at the matrimonial goal, a ducal coronet being the only motive which had induced her to sacrifice at the temple of Hymen: a more youthful object than her present lord might indeed have been preferred; but her carriage was emblazoned with the arms of a duchess, and that was sufficient; she had a princely suite, a magnificent mansion, a profusion of diamonds, and her husband was a duke. What other titles he was deficient in was to her a matter of insignificance—she could act like a duchess, live like a duchess, look like a duchess, and all other

other considerations sunk beneath her eye, for they had never touched her heart.

Such was lady Caroline Winterside, and such the duchess of Blaise, when her young sister, the lovely, the timid, the interesting, tender-hearted Julia, was consigned to her care; over whom she exerted such unbounded sway as to suffer her only to bow to her will; and the single sentence of "I insist" was so familiar to the ear of Julia, that she was accustomed never to disobey her commands.

Thus enforced by the authority of her elder sister, by whom it was thought necessary that she should remain at a seminary till she was nearly eighteen years of age, and never permitted to go beyond the precincts of a country village, with the strictest injunctions imposed by the duchess on her preceptress, not to permit lady Julia to appear more than  
she



she really thought her, a mere child. Fortunately, however, for Julia, she had long ceased to have been considered so by the amiable and accomplished woman under whose care she was placed: Mrs. Melbourne, the widow of a colonel, grieved for the irreparable loss of a husband whom she had fondly loved, determined on a seclusion from the gay world, only to render herself a more valuable ornament to society, by the exertion of those highly-accomplished talents with which nature had so eminently endowed her, by her care and instruction of a select number of youthful pupils, which did not exceed more than thirty, in all the branches of useful as well as ornamental education; and the many young ladies who had returned to their parents, moulded as it were by the hands of the Graces, with minds and manners formed and improved by their elegant preceptress, had ranked Mrs. Melbourne's

Melbourne's school high in the estimation of personages of the first nobility and fashion.

The above-mentioned consideration had never been a matter of moment with the duchess of Blaise, and her placing Julia under the care of Mrs. Melbourne was merely owing to a slight recommendation given by one of her fashionable associates. A young growing girl, whose beauty was hourly ripening into maturity, was an object of antipathy to the duchess; and though she had scarcely seen Julia since the days of her childhood, yet the necessary communications which were obliged to be given her, through the hands of Mrs. Melbourne, pencilled with so high a colouring the beauty and improved graces and accomplishments of her amiable sister, that her soul sickened at the bare recital, conscious that no excuse could now avail, for not ushering her into that world



world she was formed to adorn. Out of temper with her kind preceptress, yet not wishing to acknowledge the cause, she wrote a letter to Mrs. Melbourne, couched in the most distant and imperious terms, informing her, that her grace the duchess of Blaise was not accustomed to be dictated to, and that, if she thought it proper that lady Julia Winterside should remain at her studies five years longer, she (her grace) should not hold herself in any way responsible to state to Mrs. Melbourne her particular reasons why her commands should be strictly enforced.

A smile of contempt bestowed on the writer, and a deep sigh of concern for her amiable pupil, was all that Mrs. Melbourne felt on the arrival of her grace's letter, which was in a few days followed by a visit from the duchess herself; and on this occasion, she descended from her carriage with all the airs and graces of  
conscious

conscious superiority, which the truly great never feel, and the little great always do.

Mrs. Melbourne received her with a cool, placid, and dignified deportment, but her keenly-penetrating eye, when speaking of the lovely Julia, caused a momentary blush even to overspread a deep mask of rouge, with which her grace's cheeks were highly ornamented; but she checked her rising anger, fearful that Mrs. Melbourne might discover the real cause of her resentment, and assuming a smile of the most insinuating complacency, she replied to Mrs. Melbourne's question of—"Does your grace mean to deprive us of the sweet society of lady Julia so soon? I had indeed expected—but wished—rather hoped, a few days might have been delayed."

"Oh, by no means, Mrs. Melbourne. If she has the least desire to remain at Petworth, I have not the slightest objection; in conjunction, indeed, with the wishes

wishes of my lord duke, I entered into a sort of arrangement for Julia to *come out* somewhere about the commencement of the next winter; but, positively, she is still so extremely young, so *outrée*, so unfinished—you understand me, Mrs. Melbourne?"

To which Mrs. Melbourne instantly made the following quaint reply :

" Positively no—I do not understand your grace. Lady Julia Winterside is eighteen years of age, a period at which most young ladies are supposed to have arrived at the years of womanhood; nor do I conceive there is any thing *outrée* in the character of lady Julia, except she may be termed so by possessing the uncommon attractions of a most beautiful person, blended with the rare accomplishments of a most superior mind."

The duchess reddened. Mrs. Melbourne spoke impressively, and without fear of giving offence to one whose good opinion she was indifferent about; but the duchess

duchess was not insensible to a retort so directly levelled at herself, though her pride was too powerful to appear in the slightest degree offended by it; she chose rather to make a virtue of necessity, and began a warm eulogium on the merits of Mrs. Melbourne—of the celebrity which she had gained by her superior mode of educating her young ladies—paid into her hands a large amount for the expences of lady Julia—and lastly, expressed a wish to see her, which was immediately complied with.

On her entrance to the drawing-room, with a respectful curtsy, directed to her sister, the duchess cast an oblique glance towards her, and exclaimed, with involuntary emotion—"My God! what a resemblance of my mother! Grown indeed! Why, Mrs. Melbourne, the girl is a perfect *colossus*!"

Scarcely could Mrs. Melbourne repress laughing in her grace's face, as with conscious triumph she led the beautiful and

trembling

trembling Julia to a seat, the idea of a colossus assimilating with the delicate and graceful form, and a face which seemed to breathe the air of a Hebe, being so malignant as to cause even envy to blush.

"Do you not perceive," said the Duchess, examining every feature of Julia's face with the most scrutinizing attention—"do you not perceive, Mrs. Melbourne, an uncommon family likeness? I was, at Julia's age—that is, I mean, when a mere child, the exact counterpart of this girl: and she is like my brother too. You would positively swear it was Valentine dressed up in women's clothes—Do you not discover, I say, a strange resemblance?"

"It would be strange," thought Mrs. Melbourne, "if I could discover what no one else can see but yourself." But Mrs. Melbourne did not choose to hazard a reply, her opinion not being exactly consonant with that formed by her grace.

From

From this interview, in little more than a twelvemonth, lady Julia Winter-side quitted the abode of her preceptress; her future destiny being moulded by her sister, she came out, according to the fashionable phrase, the winter following, and was introduced into the great world, the object of universal admiration and praise.

Among the numerous pretenders to her hand was her present lord, the count of Rosenberg. He was confessedly a favourite of the duchess, because he was immensely rich. He sought the hand of lady Julia, and was accepted, not by the timid maid herself, but her imperious sister; and she was led to the altar, not to pay her vows at the *shrine* her heart adored, but the hapless sacrifice of ill-starred ambition.

CHAPTER V.  
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THE baron had caused a hermitage to be erected near the banks of the lake, which was so embosomed by a thick foliage of trees, that it was scarcely perceptible till you were nearly arrived at the entrance. This hermitage, the favourite retreat of the baron in happier days, was by him consecrated to the Muses, and no art had been spared to render it appropriate to calm and pleasing meditation. A selection of the most approved, both of modern and ancient authors, were here to be found ; while paintings, by artists of the first celebrity, decorated its walls, of which a full length portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, on the morning of her execution, was strikingly beautiful. The calm resignation which appeared in the countenance of this lovely

ly

ly and unfortunate woman, and the placid dignity, blended with the celestial expression of her eyes, which seemed to say, "some heart yet will sorrow for me," could not fail to awaken in the feeling bosom commiseration and pity for her unmerited fate.

In this secluded spot, Mary had not been passed over with neglect; oft had the uplifted eye, which contemplated her portrait, been bedewed with a tear of sensibility, and oft had the warm-breathed sigh melted the snowy bosom which encased a heart of the purest mould. Whose was that eye, and whose that bosom, a tale, yet unrevealed, will yet unfold.

There was something, however, in the hermitage on this morning that invited the baron to the spot. The door was already more than half open, and at the foot of it, the first object that arrested his attention was a little straw bonnet, filled with wild flowers, tufts of moss,



and some curious shells. Imagining that the owner of these simple treasures could be no other than the little foundling, and that she was somewhere at play near the spot with Lucretia, he felt an involuntary emotion that chance should bring him to behold her for the first time, which emotion, perhaps, was not unmixed with the sentiments expressed in lady Julia's letter, and he entered the hermitage, but certainly not prepared for the object which so immediately presented itself before him.

By the side of some flowery shrubs, on a mat, and close to the entrance of the door, as if exhausted by the exertion of her playful diversions, lay the sleeping Robertina! One little hand grasped a piece of plumcake, and the other folded to her breast a wax-doll she had been dressing; but never had infantine beauty presented so sweet a picture of loveliness to the baron as in the angelic countenance of the little sleeper.

Intently

Intently gazing on her, he stood for a few moments wrapt in silent contemplation; for, to his utter astonishment, the features of Robertina were blended with a striking similarity to his own!

His heart fluttered with wild and impetuous tumults—his pulse beat high—his limbs trembled, and his countenance became of an ashy paleness; and he exclaimed—“ Oh, God! can this child be Augusta’s? Augusta’s child! I rave—Augusta is dead! she never bore a child! —Oh no! it cannot be Augusta’s!”

The beauty of the little foundling again drew his attention. The glow of exercise seemed to have given brighter tints to a complexion of the fairest delicacy; and though her eyes were closed, yet the long silken lashes foretold that they were correspondent with the colour of her hair, which appeared like shreds of gold, and waved in profusion over a forehead of the nicest *contour*; her cherub mouth half disclosed the white blossoms

soms of her teeth, and seemed to invite a kiss from her protector; and he was about to invoke a blessing on the beautiful innocent, when, in the same moment, he perceived a huge snake, nearly concealed by the foliage, gliding rapidly towards her.

Shocked by its appearance, more than by any injury the child might sustain, he darted at it one of the earthen pots, filled with flowers, and the noise disturbing the little slumberer, she awoke.

The baron drew her gently towards him, and taking her in his arms, endeavoured, by caresses the most endearing, to engage her attention; but though not abashed, she was silent, and he could not obtain a single sentence, till he ventured to ask her name, to which she replied, with ineffable sweetness—"Robin; and sometimes Adam calls me Robin Goodfellow."

The baron smiled, supposing that Adam must have had in his idea Robin Goodfellow

Goodfellow in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which was really not unapt to the sweet Ariel-figure of little Robertina.

"Well, and whom do you love, my pretty Robin?" said the baron.

"Nurse and Adam," replied she.

"Nobody else?" continued the baron.

There was a playful arch simplicity in the countenance of the little foundling, as she raised her eyes, with timid sweetness, to the baron, and replied—"May I love you?"

Tears started to the eyes of the baron, and he folded the little pleader to his breast, with emotions he had now no inclination to suppress, while he imprinted on her cherub lips a thousand kisses.

From this moment the foundling child became of importance to the baron, and "may I love you?" ever in his recollection. It was now of little moment to him who or what were the parents of Robertina, since he determined on making her the

future heiress of Winterside Castle, and to consign her to the hands of the countess of Rosenberg, till she should receive the first rudiments of her education. Where, indeed, but to the gentle Julia, could he confide so sweet a treasure? Besides, was she not a sacred deposit, whom it would be cruel to abandon, and unmanly to neglect? The count of Rosenberg might object. He loved lady Julia with a kind of jealous madness, and the mystery of Robertina's birth might excite emotions of a too scrupulous delicacy.

The baron, however, predetermined on making the attempt whenever his guests should make their appearance at Winterside Castle, and if the accomplishment of his wishes failed, to become himself her preceptor. One secret must remain with him inviolable, till the foundling, if she lived, should have completed her twenty-first year, and that was, not to disclose, even to his beloved Julia, what  
sort

sort of provision he had in store for the future establishment of Robertina, who was now never suffered to be a day apart from him, to the great joy of her long-attached friends, Adam and Lucretia, the latter of whom often looked at the blue mark under the left breast of her little darling, from which she augured much good fortune to Robertina, who was rapidly increasing in the good graces of her protector, and the baron felt it impossible to resist the pleasure he experienced in her society. She would follow him from place to place like a little fawn; she had an unceasing flow of spirits, and her playful tricks afforded him amusement; and often, as he contemplated the extreme beauty of her countenance, a sudden thought possessed him of a striking similarity of features, which he could discover in Robertina, even of the lady-baroness his mother; and only that lady Julia's eyes were of a soft blue, and those of the little found-

ling a sparkling black, yet when she smiled, there was a look altogether so expressive of his beauteous sister, which it was utterly impossible to define a cause for. Strange thoughts possessed the imagination of the baron, as he clasped this lovely innocent to his breast, which thoughts were as immediately rejected, when he reflected on the immaculate purity of lady Julia. The count of Rosenberg was her husband, and he watched over the guardian treasure he possessed with the wary eye that a miser views his hoarded bags, coveting the light that might even reflect a ray upon it.

The summer was now fast approaching, and every sort of elegant arrangement was making in the castle for the expected visitants, and a suite of apartments fitted up for their reception, which did honour to the superior taste and fancy of the baron. The apartments appropriated for the use of lady Julia were superbly beautiful; and her brother, well acquainted

acquainted with the habits and disposition of his accomplished sister, had spared no pains to render the castle, during her abode there, worthy of such a guest. Well knowing her *penchant* for flowers, he had procured a collection of the most delightful exotics: music was not neglected, and a harp was placed in her drawing-room, with a painting of Petrarch's favourite, Laura, copied from the finest original, on which one morning the little foundling being permitted to go into the room, ran up to it, exclaiming—"Oh, what a pretty lady! I wish that lady were *here*—how I should love her!"

"Do you love nothing but what is pretty?" inquired the baron, transported with the beaming expression which glowed in the fine features of Robertina, whose attention was rivetted on the portrait.

"Oh yes; indeed I love my nurse," she replied, "and she is not at all like  
that



that pretty lady, but I love her dearly for all that."

"So," thought the baron, "gratitude is already inherent in her infant breast. Oh, may that breast never be divested of so sacred a gem! without which, its snowy blossoms will lose half their sweetness, and like the eye which has never glistened with the tear of sympathy, beam without lustre, the brilliance of which is only reflected with a superior light, when it is the meteor that enlivens the shrine of sensibility."

## CHAPTER VI.

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SHAKESPEARE has delineated the character of man perfect, were he but constant; that one error, he justly observes, fills him with faults—a fault but too fatally exemplified in the baron of Wintertside,

terside, from whose history it is now necessary to remove the mystic veil, which for seventeen years induced him to become a misanthrope. The error was his own, and dearly has he paid the forfeiture. From hence mankind has no reason to boast of superior wisdom; for he was gifted with an understanding of the finest order, a heart cast in sensibility's purest mould, a delicacy that would not have caused the cheek of modesty to blush deeper than the tints which nature gave it, a person that might have graced an Apollo Belvidere, a countenance that reflected a noble mind, manners that united elegance with dignity, and principles the basis of which was sound integrity and unshaken honour. Could such a man, the very standard of all human perfection, fall to the very lowest of all human error, and easily? Very easily, for the cause was woman, an elucidation of which is presented in the following pages.

When

When the honourable Valentine St. Ormond succeeded to the titles of his father, Werter, baron of Winterside, he had just attained his twenty-second year, and returned from a tour he had been making through the delightful climes of Italy, only in time to receive a benediction from his expiring parent, lady Caroline then being on the eve of her nuptials with the duke of Blaise, and the lovely Julia, only then thirteen years of age, at Mrs. Melbourne's seminary.

To his young and amiable sister, Mr. St. Ormond had ever been most fondly attached, not only because she possessed those qualities most engaging to the heart of her brother, but to her birth being marked by the melancholy event of her mother's death, the baroness of Winterside having only lived three days after she had given birth to Julia. St. Ormond had loved his mother with the most enthusiastic fondness, and it was to this circumstance that Julia had become  
a strong

a strong object of his regard, as his sister Caroline had ever been that of his indifference, her haughty manners, and vindictive disposition, which from infancy she had evinced in various shapes, but ill contrasting with a mind like his own; and though she possessed unbounded influence over the mind of his father, he could not conquer his dislike to her propensities, which he feared would one day preponderate much to the disadvantage of his darling Julia; and so it happened in the disproportionate shares of fortune which the baron had bequeathed to his daughters at his demise, lady Caroline being in possession of twenty thousand pounds, and lady Julia but five.

The will of the late baron was read with indignity by St. Ormond, and immediately on his coming to his title, he presented his sister Julia with a bequest of fifteen thousand pounds, making her fortune equal to that of lady Caroline, a circumstance

father bestowed her hand where she had voluntarily given her heart. To whom did she give her hand? on whom had she bestowed her heart? To this all-perfect of his sex, the young and accomplished baron of Winterside.

St. Ormond had seen Augusta during the days of his minority; and seeing, he admired, loved, adored, sighed, and languished, but not in vain. Augusta heard him, not without pity; and like the gentle Desdemona,

“Beheld Othello’s visage in his mind.”

Swift on the downy pinions of transported love flew the first periods of their marriage: Augusta was the happiest of her sex, and her husband the most envied of his! The magnificence of the *fête* given in commemoration of their nuptials had emblazoned the whole country with the novelty of its splendour; Winterside Castle exhibited a scene of festivity scarce ever witnessed; and the names of Valentine and Augusta

gusta burst with applauses, even from the lips of infantine beauty and decrepit age.

The breathing sweets of a paradise within themselves appeared, and was in reality the peculiar lot of this distinguished pair, when a fatal Circe contaminated, with her poisoned breath, the rosy garland love had entwined around them; and withering at her touch, each beauteous flower drooped its head and perished.

But to proceed : in compliment to her beloved Valentine, the duke and duchess of Blaise, who had been present at their marriage, received the most distinguished and flattering marks of attention at her hands; but this was all, as it was impossible for such a character as the duchess, and a mind like that of the young and lovely baroness, to be attached stronger to each other than by the mere ties of consanguinity. The immense fortune of the young bride  
greatly

greatly mitigated, however, for that natural antipathy which her grace could not avoid feeling towards objects more attractive than herself; and there was a sort of something like respectful civility kept up between them, which, whenever the baron and baroness visited the metropolis, made them sometimes guests at her house.

But it was not to be supposed that the baroness could long remain a stranger to the lovely and interesting lady Julia, who, though still considered a child, had twice been permitted to visit Portman-square, during the short time that her brother and his Augusta were the occasional guests of the duchess, and who was farther indulged, at the repeated solicitation of the baroness, with a short leave of absence from her studies, and to accompany her brother and his amiable bride, for one month, to Winterville Castle; at the expiration of which time, the duchess obtained a promise

mise from the baron, that he would himself conduct his young charge back to the metropolis.

The promise was given, and ratified by the ruby lips of the smiling Augusta; and the delighted Julia could scarce conceal her transports, when she beheld her brother's travelling chariot drive up to the door of the duchess's splendid mansion.

Oh, month! delightful fleeting month! passed in the society of two objects most endearing to the soul of man—an adored wife and beloved sister!

Why had not the minutes of time procrastinated the evil hour, which was then falling on the head of the misguided St. Ormond? or why had not the celestial Augusta then breathed her last, confident in the assurance of his true and chaste affection? The sigh that would have wafted her gentle spirit to the realms of bliss would then have been free from the agonizing pang of his dishonour.

On



On the morning that was destined for Julia to return to the metropolis, her full and affectionate heart relieved itself by shedding torrents of tears on the bosom of the amiable baroness, who, much affected, a thousand times repeated—"Be comforted, dearest girl, and rest assured that I shall ever remember you with the truest affection."

These words were accompanied by the most valuable present she could bestow, a miniature of herself set in pearls, the back of which enclosed a lock of her beautiful hair, on which was simply engraven, "*Remember Augusta.*"

Julia pressed it to her lips, but she wept bitterly; and, as she tore herself away from the embraces of the baroness, sobbed out—"Oh, madam, should I never more behold you (for perhaps we may never meet again) your grateful Julia will bless you in her prayers night and morning. Farewell, and angels guard you!"

The

The baron would not suffer a word more to be said on either side, but hurrying his sister into the chaise, returned to take leave of the baroness. He clasped his arms around her, but she had caught the infection from Julia, and her bright eyes swam in tears.—“ My Augusta, why this emotion?” uttered the baron; “ we part but for a short time, my love, and your Valentine will return happier than ever. I will write to you by every day’s post. Adieu, my angel! Coachman, drive on.”

The carriage and horses were instantly out of sight; and the countess, ever gentle and placid, endeavoured to recover her serenity. She first sat herself down to her harp, and struck a few chords of a favourite air, composed by Phillips—

“ Though parted, let thy heart be mine,  
As holy angels, chaste and true;  
And you shall call that bosom thine,  
That never can be false to you!”

The sweet voice of a seraph could only equal that, modulated by taste, feeling, and expression, in Augusta's; and as she warbled forth, "That never can be false to you," the thoughts of her now absent Valentine caused the unbidden tear to fall on a cheek, whose whiteness rivalled snow; and a sensation, which she was wholly unable to overcome, agitated her gentle bosom. Hastily she arose from the harp: the sun was rising in its horizon; she stationed herself at the window, and the first object that arrested her attention there was a hawk, who had seized on a harmless woodpecker, and was carrying it off.

"Heartless wretch," thought the baroness, "equal only in cruelty to rapacious man! He, too, can boast of his prey; and, possessed of the power, spares not the being who looks up to him for protection."

The baroness then selected some of her most favourite authors; and this day

day and the day following were employed in pursuits most adapted to her tasteful and elegant mind.

But she was not long suffered to remain without a companion; for on the evening of the fourth day after the departure of the baron, a carriage with four out-riders drove into the castle-gates, and the well-known crest of her beloved father, "I die in Truth," made her no stranger who was her illustrious guest; in a few minutes she was folded in his arms, and—"How does my darling?" and, "Welcome, dearest father!" followed by the most delightful intercourse of reciprocal affection.

Lord Montalbin expressed a little surprise to find his Augusta alone; but charmed with her society, regretted not the absence of her lord; for never was daughter more beloved, or a father more revered: an only child, in her had concentrated the proudest hopes of his ambition, and the dearest wishes of his heart; and when he bestowed this sa-

cred treasure on the destined partner of her choice, he was fully sensible of the value of the gift, and still watched with a wary eye the intrinsic qualities of her possessor, in which he could not discover the slightest speck. He had, therefore, long admitted his son-in-law to be the most amiable and accomplished of his sex; and thus satisfied of the earthly happiness of his darling child, lord Montalbin hoped to glide smoothly down the stream of life, trusting that his voyage to the *next* would be to that coast, where the pilots who conducted him thither would be a safe conscience, unshaken integrity, and a sound heart.

Short-sighted mortal! boast not of eternal peace in a world like this! reckon not on the bliss of to-day! Reflect, that the sunbeam of to-morrow may shed its rays for the last time on thy devoted head, and the evening star conduct thee to thy grave!

If any thing could increase the happiness of the baroness in the society of  
her

her beloved parent, it was the every day's courier, which arrived with letters from her no less loved Valentine, wherein he lamented the necessity of remaining in town three weeks longer than he had expected, owing to a most unavoidable circumstance which had taken place in ministerial business, at a meeting on which it was indispensably necessary that he should be present.

This was really the case; and had this been the only preventative which delayed his journey nearly two weeks after the above-mentioned period, peace and bliss had still been the portion of Valentine and Augusta—but it was destined to be otherwise.

The duchess's splendid parties, which graced her mansion in Portman-square, had lately arrived to a degree of celebrity so fashionable, that it was thought intolerable to be a night absent from her gay and festive revels—for revels they were, and of the most luxuriant

kind. Sole mistress of the infatuated, as well as almost superannuated duke, she expended the most costly sums on her entertainments, outrivalling every other in splendour and magnificence.

A tear for misery, a sigh for the unfortunate, a smile for the industrious, were strangers in the bosom of the duchess of Blaise. She never beheld a beggar, without betraying symptoms of disgust and abhorrence, imposing strict commands on her domestics never to admit the filthy creatures in her presence; she made it an invariable rule never to give charity, not even where merit and neglected genius demanded, by their superior claims, a benefaction—thus adding example as well as profligacy to her other evil propensities.

By witchcraft (to call it fascination is impossible) she insensibly attracted her brother to attend, for successive evenings, her *petit soupers*, which he at first only visited from compulsion, at last from

from inclination. Sometimes she led him to the Opera; and it was on one of these fatal evenings, that she obtained his promise of accompanying her to see a new piece, brought out for the express purpose of introducing a novel performer. At first the baron declined; and perhaps at that moment, we will do him the justice to suppose, a sigh, sacred alone to his absent Augusta, filled his mind.

But what is man? That is a question best to be resolved by Eve, who, when she held the forbidden fruit in her hand, tempted Adam: and what did he do? Why, the wise man partook of it,



CHAPTER VII.  
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But the duchess was not to be so repulsed, and whenever any favourite project entered her imagination, design and execution were almost immediately with her the same. With a smile the most insinuating she could assume, she exclaimed—"Oh, that is excessively naughty of you; Valentine! What; refuse poor sister Cary such a simple request, when she so much desires it? Well, mighty sir," continued she, altering her tone, and affecting an air of the most stately grandeur, "if my arguments fail, *here* are pleaders that cannot sue to you in vain."

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"What mean you, Caroline?" inquired the baron, as her grace, unclosing the folding doors of an interior apartment, discovered, to his surprise, not one, two, or three, but a whole levee of young and beautiful females, who, instantly surrounding him, would not suffer him to escape, without a promise of joining them at the Opera.

Thus the duchess obtained the wished-for point; and "no refusal, no refusal," was uttered, in languishing accents, from at least twenty cherub-lips.

The baron could not positively see a reason why he should be ungallant, and to the Opera he went.

The duchess's box was crowded, and she herself was confessedly the most brilliant star, though not the most beautiful, displaying a profusion of diamonds, the exhibition of which gave her the most unbounded pleasure.

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With the diabolical intention of provoking further mischief, the duchess still continued, with an insidious smile, to expatiate on her charms, nor ceased till the carriages drew up to convey them to Portman-square; and they were about to depart, when the instantaneous alarm of fire, which burst from numerous personages who were behind the scenes, created a disturbance and an uproar not to be imagined.

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Could that voice, which a few moments

ments before had melted all hearts, be heard without pity? could that form, which had enchanted all eyes, be disregarded? Certainly not. The baron's carriage and horses stood ready at the door, and he happened to be the only somebody the lady thought proper to cast a pair of the most lovely and captivating blue eyes on, that ever graced a Medicean Venus.

Those eyes must surely have pleaded powerfully, when he instantaneously made her an offer of his carriage, to convey her to her lodgings. *He*, the baron of Winterside! *SHE*—Alas! what was she?—madame Lothaire, the daughter of an artful courtesan!

Perhaps we will say, that from motives of compassion this offer was made, as every man ought to feel for a female in distress. Be it so—But was it also compassion that induced him afterwards to accompany her home?

Reader,

Reader, if you can attribute this piece of gallantry to compassion only, it is more than I can.

Suffice it to say, that in less than three weeks from this period, the noble Valentine became the victim of this seducing Circe, and, to his own dishonour, added the sacrifice of an angel-wife!

In vain were parliamentary debates made his excuses for so long remaining in the metropolis; his letters to the baroness were now short, wild, and incoherent. They startled, they alarmed her. She doubted—feared—suspected, yet loved—and doted.

Not so the earl of Montalbin; the truth flashed on his mind; and detraction, swift on eagles' wings, soon conveyed to the ear of Augusta the dreadful tale of her husband's dishonour.

An incensed father rushed forth to avenge a daughter's wrongs, but the voice of his Augusta forbade contention.

In

In a few weeks the delirium fled from the spell-bound senses of the wretched Valentine; but who can paint the sufferings of his tortured mind?

Lord Montalbin had borne for ever from his guilty sight the treasure he had been so unworthy to possess, and to the shores of a foreign land conveyed his heartstruck child, who, sinking on an aged parent's breast, for a while supported the indignant blow she had sustained.

The distracted Valentine wept, prayed, entreated—but in vain: pride bore up the spirit of Augusta. Love, in her bosom so pure and holy, was not yet extinguished, but a deep sense of injured honour remained for ever; and a separation, the terms of which were strictly enforced, and most rigidly performed, forbade her miserable, though repentant husband, ever to approach her more.

In the first days of his distracting grief, the baron visited that abode where  
every

every thing reminded him of the celestial being to whose vows of chaste affection he had proved an apostate—whose peace he had murdered—whose future days he had clouded with sorrow—and whose fair form had only blossomed to decay ; and thrice doubly did he curse the detested sorceress who had beguiled him in an evil hour of all his soul held most sacred ; in abhorrence of whom, and that he might never more behold her, he now performed that unbroken vow, which he sent up to Heaven as irrevocable—never, after this fatal period of his days, to admit a female to his presence, or grant protection to a woman.

Thus he commenced his solitary seclusion from the world, where he strictly performed the penance he had imposed on himself, holding no communication whatever with his nearest connexions ; during which time his sister Julia had become the wife of count Rosenberg ; and the detested Lothaire, after  
having



having pursued a course of life too fatal in its effects to last long, ended her miserable career in an obscure village at St. Cloud.

The baron, as before mentioned, had confined himself to only two objects he ever permitted to approach him—namely, Adam Oldstaff and Lucretia Timbertop; and these faithful domestics he retained in his service, not only because they were the favourites of his adored Augusta, but were acquainted with the full extent of his misfortunes.

The duchess of Blaise had affected a sorrow she did not feel at the domestic calamity of her brother, and lately had obliterated him so completely from her memory, as to be utterly indifferent whether such a being was in existence or not. Not so lady Julia: she yet fondly loved that brother she was obliged to censure; but her heart bled with pity for the unmerited fate of the amiable Augusta, whose lovely portrait she often contemplated,

contemplated, till her tearful eye and heaving bosom confessed the participation she felt in her sorrows; but from motives of delicacy to her brother, she dared not address a letter to her. What could she say on such a subject? She chose rather to remain silent. Augusta was an angel—Heaven would shower down its choicest blessings on her head; but her brother was a sinner, and though he had avowedly proved himself a repentant one, yet the punishment which had awaited him, she could not but acknowledge was just; and she reflected, and bitterly reflected, that her own path of life had not been strewed with roses, but far otherwise, and that she carried in her own bosom a thorn which had long corroded her peace, injured her health, and yet coloured her days with painful retrospection. Such were the reflections of lady Julia, and such precisely the state of the baron's domestic affairs,

fairs, when one evening Adam Oldstaff somewhat suddenly entered his apartment; he held a sealed packet in his hand—a tremor shook the old man's frame—tears chased each other down his furrowed cheeks, and, in a voice scarcely audible, he uttered—"My leige lord and master, an unknown messenger delivered this packet at the castle-gate: I questioned him from whom? when he replied—'From lord Henry Montalbin,' and after partaking of a slight refreshment, departed."

The sudden intelligence, the name so fatally beloved, and still so sacredly dear, operated so powerfully on the feelings of the heart-struck baron, that he fainted in the arms of Adam, and a considerable length of time elapsed before he felt himself sufficiently composed to break the seal, which he did with a trembling hand; but what were his emotions, when he read the following lines, dictated by

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an agonized father, fully aware that a few hours would terminate the existence of a beloved child :—

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“ The flower you cropt before its blossoms had well expanded, will, in a few hours, be no more ! The angel of death hovers over the spirit of my expiring child, whose wish it now is, to breathe pardon and forgiveness to your repentant soul ! Hasten then to behold her for the last time, and console, if possible, the deeply-wounded feelings of

“ HENRY MONTALBIN.”

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The situation of the baron, on perusal of this letter, may easier be imagined than described : his Augusta, his still adored Augusta, separated from whom, though life had been a blank, yet that she lived had ever been a consolation ; but the eternal separation now about to take

take place occasioned him to feel pangs of the most unutterable anguish and despair. Almost frantic, he gave immediate orders for his travelling-chaise and six horses to be got in readiness to convey him to her beloved, yet so much dreaded presence.

"I shall see thee, Augusta, my soul's adored!" exclaimed he, in a voice almost broken by sobs. "But, oh God! in what manner shall we meet?—to part—eternally to part! My love—my wife—my murdered angel!"

"My honoured lord—my dear master, be composed, I conjure you!" cried Adam, alarmed at the wild and fixed despair which he perceived had taken possession of the baron; and hurrying him into the chaise, the postillions demanded to know whither they were to proceed.

"The earl of Montalbin's!" vociferated Adam.

There needed no necessity to repeat the

the command, for the postillions setting spurs to their horses, were out of sight in a moment, while Adam hastened to console his fellow-partner in sorrow, the weeping Lucretia, who now offered up, for the repose of the spirit of her dear and gentle mistress, a prayer of a pure and upright heart, aided by the pious reflection that she was neither too amiable, nor yet too lovely, for Him who had summoned her to that bourne from whence no traveller ever returns, to tell of the past, or to anticipate the future.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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IT was a late hour when the baron arrived at Penrith Priory: the waning moon reflected her silver light on its moss-grown towers; and as the carriage approached

approached the eastern gate, more dead than alive, he commanded the postillions to drive slowly through the avenue. Every nerve shook with a trepidation he could not overcome, and the solemn stillness of the night added to the forebodings of his agitated mind.

He was received at the hall by only two domestics, one of whom, grey-headed in the service of the earl's family, discovered an emotion he could not conceal, as he silently conducted him to an apartment which had been prepared for his reception.

The baron was overpowered by the excess of his feelings.—“You weep, Rodolphus,” uttered he, grasping the hand of the old man with convulsed passion; “you weep, while my eyes have not a tear left.”

Rodolphus did indeed shed tears, and now turned his head aside to conceal from the baron a concern he thought it improper to express; but the baron, grasping

grasping him still more firmly, exclaimed—"Speak, old man—Answer me!—Trifle not, I charge you, for I am frantic! Is your mistress——"

"Still living," instantly replied Rodolphus. "Be composed, I beseech you, my lord. The baroness is yet alive.—Permit me to inform the earl that your lordship is here."

"Do so," cried the baron, gasping for breath; "do so; the minutes are precious—Tell him that I attend his summons."

Scarce five minutes had elapsed, before Rodolphus returned, and conducted the baron into the presence of lord Montalbin. The heart-broken father could not utter a sentence, but the penitent prostrated himself at his feet; he dared not touch the hand which motioned him into silence, but the tears of contrition, which fell in large drops of anguish over his faded cheeks, his haggard looks, his wild despair, and, more than all, his



we only meet to part?" uttered the baron, while sobs rendered his voice inarticulate. "Honoured father of the angel we both adore," continued he, "are there yet no faint hopes? Can nothing be thought of to aid her recovery? nothing be done to save her?"

"My son, do not afflict me thus," replied the earl; "compose yourself, I beseech you. In a few hours our presence may be necessary; in the meantime, collect your fortitude, and spare the feelings of a father."

These words had due effect, though they could not sooth the perturbation of the baron's mind; but, no inducement whatever could prevail to persuade him to partake of the slightest refreshment. Half breathless, and in anticipation of the most miserable event of his whole life, he threw himself into an arm-chair beside the earl, and they remained together till the cock's shrill clarion had announced the break of morning.

A few

A few minutes before eight o'clock, lord Montalbin was summoned to his daughter's apartment, and informed by one of the attendants that usually watched by her, that the baroness appeared considerably relieved, by having slept more tranquil than she had done on many preceding nights; and that she had expressed a desire to take her breakfast in the earl's apartment, and to be dressed in her morning clothes.

More alarmed than gratified by this intelligence, and well aware of the uncertain stages of her disorder, he hastened to behold her, and the first glance he caught of her still beautiful and celestial countenance powerfully impressed on his mind that Heaven's winged messenger waited but to receive the awful mandate to convey her pure and gentle spirit into the presence of her Maker.

Doctor Fitzherbert, a man of eminent skill and practice in his profession, entered the apartment at the same moment

with the earl, but was not surprised at the change that might so little have been expected ; his very looks presaged to the now almost broken-hearted father, that a few hours would behold him childless.

A serenity appeared in the countenance of the baroness, which seemed to hold communion with a spirit willing to resign itself without a murmur.

A white morning dress was, at her request, thrown over her, her cap taken off, and her beautiful hair disposed of as she had directed ; she then desired to be placed on pillows on the sofa, and it was in this situation that the earl and the doctor found her. She presented a hand to each, smiled with ineffable sweetness, and her intelligent eyes glanced towards the door. A look from Fitzherbert informed the earl that he might do as he pleased ; and when in a whisper she demanded to know if the baron was arrived he replied yes, she instantly desired he might be admitted.

A hectic

A hectic of the brightest glow rested for a moment on her pale cheek ; her eyes brightened, but her frame trembled ; and as the doctor sat on one side, and her father on the other, they expected that the moment of beholding the baron would be her last.

" Why does he not come, my father ? " uttered she, in a quick and tremulous voice.

" He is here, my child," said the earl, as the penitent approached her ; but the agonized feelings which he in vain struggled to suppress wholly overpowered him, and he sobbed aloud. She held out both her arms to receive him.

" My Augusta ! " exclaimed he, as he leaned forward to support her.

" Forgives you," she feebly pronounced ; but it was the last effort of expiring nature—for raising her eyes towards her father, she gradually withdrew them, and rivetting her last expressive glance on her Valentine, they closed for ever !

The earl's grief, though intense, was collected; bestowing one look on the body of his lifeless child, he desired to be immediately conveyed to his chamber, where he spent many hours in prayer.

He trembled at the blow, but he did not sink under it; he felt like a man—wept like a father—but he thought like a Christian, consoling himself with the only reflection which, under present circumstances, could avail, that when his hour was also come, the next would reunite him to happiness more lasting, peace more permanent, and bliss eternal, with the spirit of his child! and directing his care, with the assistance of doctor Fitzherbert, to the recovery of the unhappy Valentine, which for many successive days was despaired of.

No idle pomp had attended the funeral obsequies of the baroness, which were plain; and on her tomb, engraven by her own desire, was the simple name of “Augusta, only daughter of the earl of Montalbin,

albin, and wife of the baron of Winterside," which was no sooner performed, than the baron, taking a respectful leave of the earl, set out for Winterside Castle, and in the bosom of solitude, silently but solemnly performed his vow of true repentance, where he became the misanthrope which the beginning of these pages represented; and where, in adoration of one object, who had formed the felicity of his life, and in detestation of her who had destroyed it, he first established that rule in the castle which no one dared to violate, and took that oath irrevocable, never to grant his protection to a woman. But whether the oath was carried up into Heaven's chancery, we know not: the little foundling was a sacred deposit, which Providence had fostered in his care; and the accusing spirit will never blush at the transaction, nor drop a tear on that page which records an action of benevolence.

## CHAPTER IX.



SWEET is the approach of summer, when Nature, pregnant with her delicious stores, pours her choicest treasures to make happy those who think lightly of her smiles. The miser, brooding over ill-gotten wealth, beholds with cold indifference each opening blossom that expands beneath the sunny ray. The voluptuary seeks, in the gratification of his lawless pleasures, a garden of his own, where thorns spring up instead of blooming roses, and the soil is corruption. The soldier views only the green laurel that has brought him victory, or the cypress which shadows the remains of his fellow-companions. The humble, the industrious, and the poor, alone seem sensible of the varying changes, and, grateful for  
the

the blessings, enjoy a double portion of the pleasures they bestow; the summer fruit is more delightful to their taste—the opening flowers more invigorating to their sense, because it is their labour which has assisted in bringing them forth.

Such were the contemplations of our recluse, on one of the finest mornings he had ever witnessed, in the month of June, when on his entrance to the drawing-room, the first object that attracted his attention was Robertina, who, skipping up to him with a little basket of flowers, presented it for his acceptance, while she archly repeated—“Am not I Robin Goodfellow now?”

There was a magic sweetness in her voice that thrilled to his heart; and as he fondly caressed her, he anticipated the moment when he should place this sweet cherub in the arms of his sister Julia, and entreat her to become a mother to her, and of whose arrival he was hourly in expectation; nor was the wished-for



moment far distant, the count and countess of Rosenberg, and the duke and duchess of Blaise, arriving with all their suite at an early hour of the evening; the latter of whom was accompanied by an uninvited, though by no means an unwelcome guest. He had been introduced to the baron, and he was much struck with his pleasing manners and prepossessing appearance, in the person of the honourable Mr. Francis Estenforth, a nephew of the present duke, and doubtless heir presumptive to his titles and estates, a circumstance which by no means rendered him an acquisition to the duchess; but, as a thing of course, and not to be remedied but by a thing *out* of course, namely, the production of a son and heir of her own, she prudently managed matters so adroitly as to ingratiate herself in the good graces of young Estenforth, and so strong was her influence exerted over his mind, that he never resisted her opinions, nor opposed any of her commands: the consequence

sequence was, that when she entreated him to accompany her down to Winter-side, she closed her argument with saying—"Positively, Frank, I will not be denied," and it became a settled point.

The meeting between the baron and his beloved Julia was affectionately reciprocal on both sides; but the moment he beheld the change which a few months had effected in her faultless form, he experienced an emotion not to be described. He observed too, that a tear she wished to hide started to her eye whenever he alluded to her indisposition, which she endeavoured to shake off, and to assume an air of gaiety and composure that was foreign to her feelings. The count of Rosenberg seemed to breathe but in her presence; yet had it been reported that the gaming-table formed no small part of his lordship's pleasures; but whether maliciously reported or not, cannot be determined except by the duchess herself, who first  
thought

thought proper to circulate such a report, and then contradicted it at her pleasure.

The baron and his guests sat down to a sumptuous dinner at half past eight, where the noble host presided with an ease and elegance which was peculiar with himself; the duchess was magnificently dressed; and though autumn was spreading fast a veil over the meridian of her charms, yet her grace was confessedly a fine woman—the countess of Rosenberg a lovely one; feminine softness being her distinguishing characteristic.

The duchess expressed a concern, which in reality was a matter of indifference, at the continued indisposition of her sister; and as she now and then caught a glance of her pallid looks in a reflecting mirror, seemed suddenly struck with the change, and rallying her, abruptly exclaimed—"Good Heavens! Julia, what a skeleton thou art grown; child! and so sombre too! positively you  
will

will set us all asleep while we remain at the castle, if you continue so insufferably mopish. Frank, where is my otto of roses?"

"Has your grace so short a memory?" demanded young Estenforth.

"Oh, true, child—I had indeed forgot," replied her grace; "my little divinity Marmozet threw it out of the window where we changed horses; my sweet Mousy is so mischievous. Valentine, you must see my monkey; it is the most beautiful creature in the world."

"I have an aversion to monkeys ever since my last trip to Paris, and can assure you that I have no violent predilection for those I have seen in this country," observed the baron ironically, as he turned towards her grace, who expressed dissatisfaction only in looks, at an observation so little consonant with her feelings.

"Well, I vow they are pretty fondlings," continued she, "and my lord duke

duke absolutely dotes upon Mousy. Do you remember, my lord duke, the scene of altercation that took place the other evening, when that horrible black——what is the odious creature's name?"

"Are you talking of St. Vincent?" demanded his grace, half shutting a small pair of inexpressive grey eyes, while his delicate mouth extended to receive part of the breast of a jellied fowl; "do you mean St. Vincent?" continued my lord duke.

To which her grace rather tartly replied—"How inconceivably dull, my lord duke, you must be of comprehension! Did I not say that horrible black? for no other black but him, I am convinced, would dare be suffered to intrude upon society, where, I am sure, he is not only an unwelcome, but an extremely disagreeable guest."

"He is reckoned far otherwise," observed the honourable Mr. Estenforth; "but I forgot he offended Mousy; yet surely

surely your grace must acknowledge that St. Vincent is most amiable, highly accomplished; and we forget the colour of his complexion, when we contemplate the superior beauties of his mind, his engaging manners, and his truly philanthropic disposition."

"Are you mad, Frank?" answered the duchess; "the boy is surely in a dream! what a ridiculous eulogium! Rosenberg, did you ever hear any thing so preposterous?"

"It is the first time," added young Estenforth, his fine features glowing with the tints of modest ingenuousness, "that I have been so unfortunate as to dissent from any opinion formed by your grace, but indeed I *must* admire St. Vincent."

The duchess coloured high with vexation. It was indeed the only time that she had met with opposition from Estenforth, and she felt mortified; and darting from her keenly-penetrating eye a glance  
the

the most sarcastic, and assuming a smile the most invidious, she exclaimed—"Oh, I have not the slightest doubt, young sir, but you have had the most convincing proofs of the existing propensities of this rare phoenix of perfection; for I am told he expends large sums to make himself popular at the faro-table, and doubtless has acquired the art of being prodigiously expert in 'plucking young pigeons.'"

At this unmerited sarcasm to her young favourite, the duke absolutely opened his eyes a little wider, and glancing towards his fair partner a look, evidently solicited an explanation of her inuendo, and ventured to utter—"Caroline, what is the meaning of all this?"

To which she instantly retorted—"Ask your nephew, my lord duke; or, Rosenberg, I appeal to you—have you not heard that Mr. Estenforth's sooty favourite, this most odious black, is nothing more or less than a professed gambler?—that he visits people of fashion

for

for the express purpose of decoying young noblemen to his house in Manchester-square, where, I am informed, literally whole fortunes are squandered away at the gaming-table?"

The count of Rosenberg coloured, and was evidently under an embarrassment, while he replied—"Then your grace has listened to, and, I fear, given credit to one of the most malicious reports that scandal ever fabricated. St. Vincent is by no means a gambler: true, he sometimes plays, and when he plays it is always high—he can afford to play high; but he is honourable to a punctilio, and would, I am persuaded, much sooner give an advantage than take it. I have both seen him lose and win with unvarying good humour, good manners, and good sense, neither being elated with his success, nor yet depressed by the loss of his money. Frank, you remember the unfortunate Vandelure? you were present,



sent, I believe, at the meeting between him and St. Vincent—pray relate it.”

Estenforth was covered with deep blushes, and hesitated; but her grace smiling sarcastically, and whose curiosity was now excited by different emotions, exclaimed—“Relate it, Frank, by all means; it is excessively amusing, no doubt—pray let us hear it.”

“Most willingly,” replied young Estenforth: “it is simply this. At a party one evening in Manchester-square, an uninvited guest made his appearance at the house of St. Vincent, and mixing in the crowd of visitants, sat down to cards at the same table with our friendly host; his manners denoted him a gentleman, and his conversation confirmed him so. St. Vincent was his partner; he played deep, and both won and lost considerably. At the conclusion of the evening, anxiety and impatience marked his countenance, and he proposed betting  
—a proposition

—a proposition which, on the part of St. Vincent, was repeatedly declined; but strongly importuned, he at length yielded—betted with the stranger, and became the winner of a considerable sum. The money was immediately paid down, and he departed, not then betraying the slightest symptom of disappointment or regret. On the following morning I had made an engagement to breakfast with St. Vincent, in which we were interrupted by the sudden and abrupt introduction of the unknown guest. His looks were pale, haggard, and even wild, his manner agitated, and his quivering lips spoke volumes, though he did not utter a single sentence, but bursting into tears, presented a written paper to St. Vincent, on which were the following impressive words:—

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*To St. Vincent.*

*A noble heart is not denoted by the  
colour*

colour of a complexion. My name is Vandelure, a disappointed man, ruined in fortune, rejected by a frowning world, grown desperate by despair. Six helpless infants, of whom I am the father, and an amiable wife, look up to me for support. I was unable to provide for them: I sought the means of honourable employment—nature pleaded, but in vain—I was denied.

‘The grandmother of my children gave me her little inheritance, a small annuity; I placed it in the hands of a merciless Jew, who accommodated me with the sum of which you last night became the possessor. It is yours, and I am a beggar. For myself I care not; but my children—Almighty God! must my children perish? My wife, too, and her helpless mother? There is phrenzy in the thought—I have meditated all night on self-destruction.

‘It is in your power to save me. Transport me to the arms of my afflicted

ed wife—give back a father to his children.

‘VANDELURE.’

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“St. Vincent was breathless with surprise and emotion: he grasped the hand of the trembling stranger; he entreated him to be calm and composed, and taking from his pocket-book bills to the amount of a thousand pounds, presented them for his acceptance—‘Poor heart-broken mourner,’ uttered he, ‘receive twice the sum thy desperate fortune staked and lost; return to thy wife and children, make happy thy aged mother, send the Jew to me, and I will render him his payment. Go, Vandelure, and blessings follow you!’

“There is a sort of gratitude, which the silent tear, the panting heart expresses, more than a million of words, and such was Vandelure’s. He hastened from the presence of his benefactor, but the look  
he

he left behind him conveyed a volume to the heart. He has since been amply provided for by the bounty of St. Vincent; and, added to his own industry, lives in competence and ease."

Estenforth bowed, and remained silent. The duchess was silent too; but she was completely vanquished, and prudently dropped all opposition for the present, on the subject of St. Vincent. The duke followed her example; count Rosenberg felt gratified; the baron, who had listened attentively to the story of the young narrator, conceived the highest prepossession in his favour; but he received a compliment of more sterling value than reiterated praises from all the rest; and, as the looks of Estenforth rested for a moment on the pearly gem, he blessed the shrine from whence it came, and the soft azure eye from whence it flowed. Whose was that shrine? and whose that tear? Lady Julia Rosenberg's!

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.  
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NUMEROUS had been the inquiries of his illustrious guests, to obtain a sight of the little foundling; but the baron had predetermined not to introduce Robertina on the first night of their arrival. She had been put to bed, therefore, at her usual hour, by Lucretia.

On the following morning, however, the curiosity of the duchess, and the impatience of his beloved sister, could no longer be kept within bounds, and when the whole party were assembled at breakfast, he desired that Robertina might be brought in.

The fondest care had been bestowed in setting off the beauty of her little darling by Lucretia, in which she was

assisted by a person lately employed in the service of the baron, a Mrs. Bailey, who had succeeded the old nurse in the capacity of housekeeper, whose age and infirmity precluded her from fulfilling the important duties of her situation, which she had resigned with great credit to her successor. Lucretia's whole employment, therefore, had been to look after the little foundling, put her to bed, dress her at rising, and to give her her accustomed meals.

Adam Oldstaff was also succeeded in his post by an active clever man, and his labour lightened by exclusively confining himself to the person of the baron, whom he attended only in his dressing-room, or in his study on matters of business.

Thus it was, that the baron had been able to entertain his noble visitants in a style they were accustomed to in the metropolis; and there was nothing wanting

ing of superior elegance, that was not to be seen in the delicacies which his table afforded them.

A soft tap at the drawing-room door announced Robertina and her nurse; and the baron, receiving her in his arms, presented her to the whole company. The duchess condescended to salute her with her imperial lips, declaring, that for a baby, she was an excessive handsome child. But she no sooner escaped from the arms of her protector, than she ran up to lady Julia, while she exclaimed—"Pretty lady, won't you kiss me too?"

Lady Julia clasped her in her arms; her brother fixed his eyes on her—she was unusually pale, and as she bent over the little foundling, an agitation pervaded her whole frame. She complained of indisposition; her brother and the count flew to her assistance, but before any remedy could be applied, she fainted in their arms.

As these momentary faintings had of



late been very common with lady Julia, the cause or the effect was not a point in question; but that the sight of the child had given rise to her present extraordinary emotion could no longer remain a secret with her brother, though unmarked by any eye but his own.

Had the count, indeed, or the invidious duchess, conceived for one moment that Robertina was the cause of her excessive sensibility, suspicion had lurked in the bosom of her husband, and calumny in the breast of her sister; for the duchess was one of those fastidious ladies whom no consideration had ever induced to pardon the indiscretion of her own sex; for if a tale of scandal had ever reached her ear, she never failed to let her tongue proclaim it to the world with additional forces, namely, rancour, envy, and derision.

At dinner the countess had recovered her composure, and when the cloth was removed, by desire of the duchess, Robertina

bertina was again brought in; and the innocent vivacity of the beautiful child insensibly attracted every one towards her.

Estenforth taking her in his arms, began to join in her playful prattle, when the duchess, examining her more minutely, suddenly exclaimed—"Good Heavens! Valentine, do observe the profile of your little *protégée*! Turn her this way, Frank: did you ever see so strong a resemblance of the baroness, our mother?"

"I acknowledge that the similarity has often struck me," observed the baron.

Then glancing obliquely towards lady Julia, he perceived an expression he could not define; and to add to the embarrassment he there beheld, my lord duke remarked, that there was a much stronger resemblance to the baron himself.

The duchess smiled, or rather made a

kind of half titter, more expressive than words, while she archly replied—"Well, I vow and protest, and so there is! My lord duke, you have uncommon penetration. She is as like the portrait of my brother, which Julia has now in her possession, as ever I beheld. Rosenberg, what say you?"

The count at that moment was wrapt in thought: he had been for many minutes before contemplating the features of the child, and at last he fixed his eyes on the blushing face of his lovely wife.—"There is a combination, I think," cried he, "of the features of the whole family."

"What! Like Julia?" exclaimed the duchess.

"Inconceivably so," answered he; "her forehead and nose, and the dimpled mouth."

Lady Julia's cheeks at this moment were tinged with blushes of the brightest vermillion.

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The duchess also reddened, but the rosy tints there might vulgarly be called the blush of envy.—“Pray, Rosenberg,” cried she, “be not so unfashionable as to entertain us with an eulogium on the beauty of your own wife; for I own I cannot perceive this prodigious likeness.”

Then turning the subject as quick as thought, she proposed a party at whist; and Robertina was again consigned to the care of Lucretia, but not without receiving the caresses of lady Julia, who having placed round her neck a little coral necklace, led her to the door, where Lucretia was in readiness to attend her. The baron followed them with his eyes; the door was half open: lady Julia still held Robertina by the hand.

“Good-night, pretty lady,” cried the sweet innocent.

Lady Julia snatched her to her heart, and kissing her forehead, in a low whisper uttered the exclamation of—“Angels

bless my child!" and Lucretia dropping a low curtsey, retired with her charge.

It was not the exclamation which his sister had made which struck so forcibly the observation of the baron, but it was her manner: her kisses had the warmth of maternal affection, her trembling agitation a mother's anxiety, and her exclamation a mother's blessing. He was lost in thought: it was strange—it was mysterious; and by degrees he connected the sentences with her present emotions, so expressive in her last letter: "How beat the tumults of a mother's heart, when she parted with this, the first darling of her affections!"

"Heavens!" thought the baron, "what am I to suppose? Can I, ought I to censure my sister? Can Julia be the mother of this child? No, no! dear girl, I wrong her. Julia is pure and immaculate as the saints in heaven! Injurious is the supposition that my bewildered

dered fancy has made. My sister Julia is not—cannot be the mother of Robertina.

## CHAPTER XL

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IN a few days the party disposed of themselves as best suited their different habits, tastes, and dispositions, and each, according to their fancy, selected the amusements of the day. The duchess, by no means fond of rural scenes, confined young Estenforth to play at chess, backgammon, and picquet, with her, while the old gouty peer, leaning on the arm of the baron, ventured to snuff the morning air, by taking a survey of the beautiful plantations which surrounded the castle, in which they were frequent-

ly accompanied by the count of Rosenberg, and sometimes his lovely countess. But lady Julia had found an employment far more delightful to her, in which it was perceptible that she hourly recovered her health and spirits, and with renovated strength again returned her beauty—namely, giving instruction to little Robertina, who was never absent from her side: at intervals, she would gaze on her with such delighted looks, and hold her to her heart with such fond enthusiasm, that gave her brother ample conjecture for believing that the secret spring of all her actions was somehow or other connected with the destiny of this child; and as the duchess, who had more than once complained of *ennui*, and had expressed a more than half wish to fix an early day for returning to the metropolis, he determined to disclose his intentions respecting the future establishment of the little foundling, by soliciting  
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the approbation of the count, in order that lady Julia might be authorized by him to superintend the education of Robertina, by immediately taking her under her protection; and he resolved to do this in the most unequivocal manner that was possible, and to speak of it publicly, as soon as he should be able to open his mind to his beloved sister.

A fair opportunity presented itself on the following morning: lady Julia had directed her path towards the hermitage, and he slowly followed her footsteps; Robertina skipt before her with a little basket, in which was deposited her morning lessons.

The countess appeared more than usually animated, and a smile, radiant as her own blooming complexion, beamed with good humour on her cherub companion; they entered the hermitage together; not a breeze ruffled the foliage, composed of woodbine and sweet-



briar, and the sun shone with resplendent lustre through an unclouded atmosphere.

"Stay, pretty lady," cried Robertina, pointing with her finger to, and advancing towards a chair which she knew was often occupied by the baron, and which Adam had forbade her to soil with her playthings, it being of a curious workmanship, and illustrated with a delicate painting of Hector and Andromache; "stay, pretty lady," cried Robertina; "you must not touch that!"

"Why not, my love?" inquired the countess.

"Because that chair belongs to somebody that I love so! Oh dear, how I do love him!—almost as well as my nurse."

"And who is that?" demanded the countess.

Robertina hesitated a moment; at length replied—"Why, he is Robin's good-man;

good-man ; but, do you know, Adam says he is not my father, and once I called him so, and Adam was so angry ! Pray, who is my father ? Can you tell, pretty lady ?”

The agitation of lady Julia during the above speech of the little prattler was so perceptible to the baron, that she appeared with difficulty to support herself. At length, gazing in the face of Robertina with the most affecting expression, then snatching her to her bosom with unutterable fondness, in the most tremulous accents she replied—“ Your father, my angel, is—in heaven !”

Tears chased each other down the cheeks of lady Julia as she finished this sentence ; and the baron, shocked and surprised, from a point of the nicest honour, ventured not a moment longer to invade the privacy of his beloved sister. He scarce doubted, yet would not allow himself to believe, that there  
was

was the affinity he suspected between the countess and the little foundling.

One grand important secret, however, was disclosed; and that the father of Robertina no longer existed was a knowledge he was happy to be in the possession of, as it forwarded, rather than retarded his views, with respect to her future establishment; and unable to solve, and not wishing to solve, any other mystery, he entered the hermitage just as the countess had endeavoured to recover her composure.—“Am I an intruder, Julia?” demanded he; “if so, I will instantly retire; but indeed you are a dangerous rival—I am already more than half jealous of you. Robin, you love lady Julia, do not you?”

“Yes, dearly,” replied she; then, running into the baron’s arms, she archly added, “but I love you best.”

“And why so?” added the baron, returning her caresses.

“Because,” answered she, flinging her arms

arms round his neck, "I loved you first of all."

The baron redoubled his caresses, and, looking at her with ineffable delight, exclaimed—"Bravo, my little Robin! older heads and wiser could not have furnished better reasons for their constancy. Had every apostate from vows of faithful love such a lesson, how many victims might be spared!—Child of simplicity and truth," continued the baron, "may the unerring dictates of thy pure and spotless heart ever be the meteor of thy mind, reflecting a double lustre on the fountain it displays! may the snow on thy bosom be sincerity, and the rose that blossoms on thy cheek modesty!"

Thus saying, the baron, placing Robertina in the arms of lady Julia, addressed her in the following words:—"Sister, I want a mother for Robertina."

Lady

Lady Julia was taken by surprise; blushes of the deepest vermilion painted her cheeks, her bosom heaved with convulsive agitation, and she replied to her brother's abrupt words in the greatest confusion—"Want a mother for Robertina!"

"Surely," cried the baron, "for whom else should I want a mother? Robertina cannot always remain a child; when arrived at woman's estate, it is certainly more delicate and proper that a female should form her youthful mind, and by example, as well as precept, expand those opening buds of promise, which it is easy to perceive is already dawning in infantine perfection."

Here the baron paused to observe the effect his words had produced, while, in faltering accents, lady Julia uttered, in evident and painful embarrassment—"I thought, brother—I rather imagined—that——"

She



She stopped, for her emotions would not suffer her to proceed, and the baron continued—"What did you imagine, Julia?"

"That—that you would never marry again."

Lady Julia struggled to suppress her feelings in giving utterance to these words, and the baron could no longer pain her gentle and affectionate bosom, and rapturously exclaiming—"Nor will I—No! by Heavens I will never marry, if my Julia will consent to receive my little foundling—if Julia will become a mother to Robertina."

The countess was silent, but a crimson blush betrayed her emotion. The baron regarded her with scrutinizing attention—"Ah, Julia, you are silent," cried he; "you refuse my solicitation. Is it then so hard a task to become the protectress of so sweet an innocent?"

Lady

Lady Julia started from her recumbent posture. She snatched the foundling to her heart—she invoked Heaven's blessings on her spotless head—she imprinted on her forehead, lips, and eyes, innumerable kisses.—“Refuse to protect Robertina!” uttered she; “Julia refuse to become her protectress! Brother, wring not from my tortured soul a confession it is impossible to disclose; but hear me, and spare, oh, in pity spare a sister's feelings! The fountain blood that flows in these veins, the vital spark that supports my existence, is not so dear to Julia as this child! Almighty God! can Julia then refuse to protect her? Yes, dear beloved Valentine, I will protect her, and protect her with my life. Yet hold, for pity's sake! Rosenberg comes this way—let not this subject be resumed in his presence! Promise, Valentine—swear never to betray your sister!”

The

The baron folded lady Julia to his beating heart.—“By all my hopes of happiness hereafter,” cried he, “I swear, eternally swear, never more to invade the secrets of a sister’s bosom !”

“I am satisfied,” lady Julia emphatically pronounced ; and on pretence of gathering some new-blown roses, which were situated in a different part of the hermitage, she completely concealed from the observant eye of her husband the conflicts she had been suffering in her agitated breast, as also the embarrassment her countenance betrayed.

“Pretty lady is here,” cried Robertina, running up to the count, as soon as she perceived him ; “do but look what a nice bunch of roses she has got in her hand ?”

Rosenberg patted her cheek, and gaily advancing towards the baron.—“Upon my soul, Winterside,” cried he, “if I become an inhabitant of your enchanted



chanted castle much longer, I shall become a very Druid, and fall in love with some of your sylvan fawns, for wherever I turn I encounter some wood-deity! I met a rosy-cheeked damsel just now, who presented the looks of a very Daphne—‘My dear,’ says I, ‘will you let me be your Apollo?’—‘No, thank you,’ replied she; ‘my grandmother has got a poll-parrot of her own, that chatters chatters about one’s ears all the day long, and never means nothing at all: so no more *polls* for Bet,’ cried she, and bursting into a loud laugh, left me to enjoy the elegant compliment she had bestowed.

The baron laughed heartily, acknowledging that rural simplicity was sometimes a match for London wit.

They continued in conversation for some time together in the hermitage, in which lady Julia became a party, till the clock reminding them of the lateness  
of

of the hour, they returned to the castle only a few minutes before the bell announced that dinner was in preparation.

## CHAPTER XII.

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THE story of Bet and her grandmother's poll-parrot was related at dinner most humourously by Rosenberg. The duchess expressed her abhorrence of the savage idiots (a term she generally applied to people living in the country). "In short," cried her grace, "I detest every thing in the shape of rusticity! Cottage pathos is to me abominable, and sensibility truly comic in the red cheeks of a vulgar dairy-maid."

"We cannot tax the sensibility of poor Bet," observed the baron, smiling; "yet believe me, it is never more genuinely displayed

displayed than by the children of artless simplicity. It would seem indeed that the inmates of the lowly cottage first gave birth to sensibility; for her welcome is denied in the higher walks of life, and her reception cold where sorrow is her companion, and penury marks her abode."

"Gracious Heaven, Valentine!" exclaimed the duchess, "let us hear no more of your moralizing, or I shall positively return to town so vapid, it will be impossible for me to collect sufficient spirit to enter the gay list of *la belle assemblée*. Julia, do you go to Guissard's masquerade? Apropos! I'll tell you a bit of a secret. Frank, leave off blushing—it is preposterous to see a modern young man of fashion blush! Well, I was going to say, that Frank and I intend to sport characters."

"But the difficulty will be to *support* them, Caroline, will it not?" observed my lord duke.

"Not

"Not at all," cried the duchess; "there is nothing more easy than to assume what we are not; and indeed I don't know but I shall be exactly in point. What think you, Julia, of my representing one of the celestial genie?"

"Which, which of them?" repeated all voices in the same instant; but the duchess was by no means disposed to have a laugh raised at her own expence, and refused to gratify their curiosity; but willing to divert the object of their mirth, she informed them that her nephew was going in the character of Cymon.

"In search of an Iphigene, most likely," observed my lord duke. "But pray, Frank, where will you find her?"

"Not at Guissard's masquerade, I dare be sworn," cried the count. "But, upon my soul, Frank, you have chosen rather an *outrée* character, that is, we may suppose you are deeply caught in Cupid's chain, and have fixed upon a masquerade

to

to disclose your passion, and breathe your vows of adoration to your lovely Iphigene."

The laugh was now completely turned against the blushing hero, who supported it very fairly; and the glass circulating, the baron proposed the health of Iphigene—a proposition agreed upon by the whole party.

I know not how it was, that in pronouncing the name of Iphigene, the eyes of young Estenforth strayed beyond the boundaries which caution had prescribed for them, but they certainly glanced towards a beautiful object, who sat exactly opposite to him. — "Here then, my lord duke," cried he, "since you will have it so, here's to the health of the divine Iphigene!"

"Inspired by all the poets and poetesses," retorted the count.

"Heaven shield me from the whining cant of poetry!" screamed out the duchess.

"Then

"Then let your grace beware of your nephew!" said the count. "Frank, shall I produce your verses? Come, come, young Orlando, we shall soon be able to discover the 'fair and inexpressive she;' all but her name you have carved on the bark of every tree: I'll swear to your hand-writing; this is your composition, deny it if you can."

"Read it, read it, Rosenberg," cried the duchess; "I shall positively expire if you don't let us hear it."

Estenforth was covered with confusion, and darting out of the room, gladly escaped from a persecution he could no longer bear, while the count read aloud as follows:—

"Is it love that fans the sigh,  
As I gaze, and know not why?  
Is it love that would betray  
Eyes that steal my soul away?  
But a holy chaste delight,  
To behold an angel bright,

Making sweet the air she breathes,

Decking love with rosy leaves !

But oh ! from eyes so soft, so pure,

A captive's pangs must I endure ?

'Tis not her smiles can set me free,

Though mistress of my destiny."

"Was there ever any thing so preposterous!" exclaimed the duchess, bursting into an immoderate fit of laughter—"Why, my lord duke, your nephew is as many fathoms deep in love, as leaves are numberless in a forest. Well, I should prodigiously like to know who is the goddess of the silver stream!"

"Upon my soul, I think the lines worthy the imagination of the young poet," cried the baron; "they are excessively pretty, chaste, and delicate."

The duchess bit her nether lip—"They are excessively ridiculous," retorted she; "but indeed, my lord duke, you must be more observant of your nephew's conduct. Gracious Heavens! should some low obscure creature have caught his fancy,

fancy, consequences might ensue that might make you repent of your indulgence. Methinks I already see the future duke of Blaise bestowing his hand and fortune on some cabbage-stalk-reared form, the progeny of a farmyard."

The calm air of composure in which the duchess delicately alluded to her husband's death (he then being present at the table) absolutely petrified her auditors; but by no means abashed by the surprise they exhibited, she continued—"I shall insist on his forswearing such idle propensities—Do you hear, my lord duke? I shall insist on an immediate reform."

"You may insist on what you please," said my lord duke, very deliberately, and hobbling towards the door; "but at present I insist on being permitted to act as I please. I am going to bed; ring for Rostrum; I have draughts to take, pills to swallow, lotions, potions, and a thousand other remedies, to apply. You



have fixed on returning to Portman-square ; I must prepare for so long a journey.—Good-night, my friends—my gout is troublesome, and my host will have the good-nature to excuse the afflictions of an old man, if he cannot pardon the absurdities of——”

Here an unlucky twinge left the sentence of my lord duke unfinished ; but whether his grace intended to say the absurdities of an old woman or not, we cannot pretend to determine, but he muttered something like it when he arrived at the foot of the staircase, to the no small amusement of his favourite valet, Rostrum, who, having no violent predilection in favour of his lady, but in other words a mortal dislike, enjoyed their matrimonial duets, which were never of the harmonic order, and which, as Ophelia observes in the play of Hamlet, were not like “sweet bells,” but a kind of instrument which jangled and jarred, and  
was

was ever out of tune—the certain consequence of a disproportioned marriage, and the want of mutual affection, without which, such rites should be rendered void on earth, as they are surely so in heaven.

My lord duke, too late, repented of his unhappy union with lady Caroline; and she too frequently experienced the effects of the bitter pill, which was so difficult to swallow, and hard of digestion.

The young poet, however, happily escaped from the thunder-storm which would have fallen on his devoted head had he made his appearance at the supper-table; but he retired to his apartment at an unusually early hour—a little discomposed, it is true; for it is not pleasant to have the secrets of the heart disclosed, when that heart does not choose, or ought not to acknowledge a confession. But, somehow or other, a certain sylph-like form floated across his imagi-

nation, and even attended his devotions on his pillow, and all unpleasant ideas faded from his recollection.

### CHAPTER XIII.

THE baron obtained two hours of private conference with count Rosenberg, the result of which was, that the little foundling should become the united charge of himself and lady Julia, till she should have arrived to the age of twenty-one, the baron adducing such reasons and motives for his request as were every way satisfactory to the mind of the count; and he proposed that she should be ready to accompany them back to the metropolis on the following morning, the day fixed on by the duchess for their departure from Winterside Castle; and the baron communicated his intentions to  
Lucretia,

Lucretia, who no sooner received the intelligence, than she burst into a torrent of tears, and with sobs, which almost rendered her voice inarticulate, entreated the baron not to separate her from Robertina, declaring solemnly she should not be able to exist many hours after her departure. She then threw herself on her knees, and clasping her hands, continued her unceasing solicitation, till the baron gently commanding her to rise from her suppliant position, desired her to sit down and compose herself.

He then calmly addressed her—"Lucretia, I have not the smallest doubt of your strong regard and firm attachment to the little foundling; you have fostered her in her infancy, and bestowed on her those endearing kindnesses, and little attentions, which have most naturally attracted the child towards you with more than common affection; you have religiously performed your duty as a nurse,

H 4

a mother,

a mother, and a Christian, for which your fidelity shall not go unrewarded: but are you not aware, my good old woman, that something more is now necessary to be done for Robertina? Shall I suffer her to remain in this castle, like a beautiful blossom, till maturity is past, without cultivation? that is, I mean, Lucretia, shall Robertina stay at Wintertide till she becomes as old as yourself, without being able to spell the letters of her own name, or read a chapter in the Bible?"

"Lord love your honour!" cried the sobbing Lucretia, "the dear lamb is a finer scholar than your honour thinks her; she cannot write, to be sure, because her little fingers cannot guide the pen, as Adam calls it; but if you was to hear her say, 'Our Father which art in Heaven,' you would never forget it the longest day your honour had to live."

Lucretia, now imagining she had given the sum total as a convincing  
proof

proof of the accomplishments of her little nursling, wiped her eyes with a corner of her apron, and a smile of satisfaction brightened a set of features, remarkable only for the good humour they displayed; but it was impossible for the baron to resist a smile.

“Very well, Lucretia,” resumed he; “and so you are of opinion this reason is sufficiently strong for my permitting Robertina to remain at the castle, the future heiress of which she may one day or other chance to be?”

Lucretia caught the last sentence of the baron, and it rung like changes on her ear, and involuntarily repeating—“The future heiress of Winterside Castle! Well, thank God! thank God! I shall die the happiest old woman in the world! Who would have thought it, that the dear little baby I nursed in these arms should ever come to be the heiress of this castle!” and Lucretia laughed and cried alternately; when the baron again

addressed her, but in a more serious and commanding tone, and she was awed into respectful silence.

"Lucretia," cried he, "I repose a secret in your confidence, and, mark me, betray it at your peril! Robertina will be the heiress of this castle; at present, she is only the little foundling, the same as when in the midnight hour, amidst the fury of a rude tempest, a miserable wretch begged for compassion at the castle-gates, and conveyed the infant hither for protection. To call her mother would be profanation—a mother could not thus abandon her child—a mother could not thus renounce the ties of sacred nature!"

"Hold! hold! for Heaven's sake, I implore you!" uttered a sweet and plaintive voice.

The baron ran to the door, and received into his arms his sister Julia.

Overcome by the excess of her feelings, by some sudden recollection, but  
more

more by the sentence which had just escaped from the lips of her brother, she was near fainting, from which she was roused by the voice of Robertina, who, running into the room, inquired of her nurse what was the matter with the pretty lady.

But lady Julia remained not many minutes insensible to the kind assiduities of the baron, who hung over her with an expression of concern, which was strongly marked in every varying feature, and of which he was by no means willing that Lucretia should become a witness; he therefore dismissed her, with a promise of arranging matters, so that she should not be separated from her little charge, with whom she now retired, her heart and her head both full of the conference she had the satisfaction of obtaining with her beloved master; and the baron, now most sedulously cautious of wounding his sister's feelings, did not

H 6                      appear



appear to notice her indisposition in any other way, than by recommending her to a few hours of calm composure: but composure was not on this day to be the lot of lady Julia, for she had no sooner retired to her dressing-room, than a loud imperious demand for admission burst from the lips of the infuriated duchess, who presented herself the complete picture of malignant fury.

“So, Julia,” cried she, as she darted at the countess a look full of spleen and ill-nature, “you have the preference in every thing, I perceive, and are as much mistress of this castle, and indeed more so, than ever Augusta Montalbin the late baroness was!”

Lady Julia observing on her sister's cheek the reddening glow of lightning's flash, expressed her surprise and astonishment, adding—“I am perfectly at a loss to comprehend your grace's allusion!”

“Oh, pretty innocent!” retorted her grace,

grace, "you were always at a loss to comprehend any thing, even when you were at Mrs. Melbourne's boarding-school!"

At the mention of Mrs. Melbourne, lady Julia's cheeks assumed an ashy paleness; and in trembling accents, she entreated the duchess to favour her with an explanation.

"What! I suppose," cried the duchess, "you will pretend to deny you have alienated Valentine's affections from me?"

"Alienated Valentine's affections from you!" echoed the countess, and bursting into tears—"Gracious Heaven! who is there on earth so cruel as to accuse me thus unjustly? Believe me, Caroline, it has always been my study to make my sister a sharer in my brother's love."

"It has always been your study to render yourself a whining, sentimental, romantic fool," cried the duchess, "in which your foolish husband has so ridiculously indulged you, that you are both  
become

become candidates for St. Luke's. Yes, countess of Rosenberg, your hypocritical tears, your hysteric faintings, and all the delicate train of tender sensibilities, have, I find, induced my brother to shew you a preference to his eldest sister—you are to have the care of the girl, I find, no doubt to finger my brother's fortune, for the purpose of instructing his little *bastard* in all the delicate sympathies of your sentimental ladyship."

Lady Julia, who was before melted into tears, was now roused, and passionately roused, and the epithet which her grace had bestowed on Robertina wounded her feelings to the highest pitch of resentment.

"It is false!" cried the countess, trembling with excessive agitation. "Cruel and unjust Caroline! Robertina is no bastard, I am well convinced; and further, I am persuaded she is no child of my brother's. Ah, sister! be just before you are severe, and reflect before you condemn."

condemn. My brother's conduct, with respect to the little foundling, has no other interest than what may be attached to a noble heart, a generous unprejudiced mind, and a philanthropic disposition; he is the best of men, and it is painful to hear him criminated, where no crimination is merited: cease then this persecution to my feelings; I love my brother, and would love my sister, if——"

The countess was not permitted to finish her sentence, at least not in the hearing of the mortified duchess, for, more enraged than ever, she darted out of the room, exclaiming—" Romantic idiot! sentimental fool!" which last sentence was heard by the count himself, who having caught a glance of the infuriated duchess, rushed by her into the dressing-room of lady Julia, whom he discovered in tears, the cause of which he instantly demanded to know; but the generous lady Julia quickly endeavouring

ing to smother her emotion, and smiling through her tears, evaded any explicit explanation on the conduct of her sister, merely remarking, that a preference having been given her in taking the charge of Robertina, had made the duchess a little out of temper with her brother.

"A little out of temper!" repeated the count; "why, I encountered her on the stairs, and she resembled nothing but one of Hecate's tribe—the witches in Macbeth could scarce look more disgustingly frightful. But mark me, Julia—if she has dared to insult you, no power on earth shall compel me to remain silent! Malignant woman! I abhor her principles, dislike her manners, and detest her system of conduct!"

"She is my sister," said the countess, in the gentlest voice possible.

"The ties of relationship are extinct when unkindness precedes affection," observed the count. "Your sister! ah, Julia! she is only a sister but by name—  
nature

nature disowns the connexion! Her frigid soul, wrapped in the icy fetters of cold indifference, never felt for you the warmth of a sister's love! Your pallid cheek—your faded form—your tearful eye, never yet touched her flinty heart, nor was her own ever yet bedewed with the genuine tear of sympathy—such relatives are none: how far more preferable is the stranger's smile—the stranger's welcome! Believe me, Julia, I am steadfast to my first principle, and am of opinion, that if relations, from one generation to another, do not cling like the young ivy to the aged oak, with the genial warmth of disinterested affection, they will eventually wither, perish, and decay, and the ties of consanguinity be forgot. My grandfather used to say, there was nothing more delightful in nature, than to witness a family tree, where the blossoms, cherished by the kindness of each other, drooped not under the influence of chilling apathy or cold


cold neglect; they bloomed together, and when the leaves dropped, like the qualities of the useful rose, left their virtues to perpetuate their memory."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

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So completely was the duchess of Blaise mistress of that refined art, which a generous bosom least suspecting becomes too frequently the dupe, that, strange to say, when she appeared at dinner, no vestige of ill-humour betrayed itself on her countenance; and so liberally were her smiles dispensed on all around, that even count Rosenberg was himself deceived, and the ever gentle and forgiving Julia lost all traces of unkindness in the now-returning good temper of her sister.

But, extraordinary as it may appear,  
her



her grace had the most natural motives possible for her conduct, namely, self-interest.—“ If I quarrel with Jallah, thought she, “ I shall lose full possession of the count's affairs, and thereby all communication with my brother,” who had lately accommodated her with pecuniary loans, which, though she never had any intention to repay, yet she had the intention again to borrow. Hence arose the mortification she had received, in not having the foundling placed under her own immediate care, a circumstance which would ever have furnished her with a pretext for drawing her brother's purse-strings to what amount she thought most convenient for her purposes; for with respect to the claim, and the natural claim, which she suspected the child to have on the baron, she had made it a settled point that he was the father of Robertina, from the very moment she listened to the story of the foundling being fostered on his protection



protection—a tale which her grace had never given credit to; and though as yet she had arrived at no proof, wherein she could contradict the assertion, yet her curiosity was raised to the highest pitch respecting the ambiguity of its birth; hoping that the unfortunate victim, as she supposed, of her brother's seduction, if yet existing, might one day come within the scope of her malevolent abuse and calumny, on whom, though unknown, a double portion of her invectives fell; and the preference given to lady Julia made her determine to dislike the foundling, merely from that very circumstance, whose beauty and infantine sweetness were as so many nettles, instead of roses, in the eyes of her grace. The consequence was, that on this very day she appeared to notice the child less than formerly, complained of the intolerable noise which children invariably created, and observed, that Robertina had a great deal too much forwardness for her age; and

and continued many ill-natured remarks, which, though they passed unnoticed, reached the ear and stung the heart of lady Julia, who rejoiced that Robertina was not old enough to be wounded by her sarcasms, which now fell pointless at the innocent bosom, they could not penetrate.

Another circumstance had further stamped her dislike towards the little foundling, and that was, because she was confessedly become a rival of her favourite Mousy in the attentions of her nephew, whose caresses were now all lavished on Robertina, of whom he had grown so extravagantly fond, that when she was present, Mousy was forgot, or only remembered as a monkey. Already had he made her some handsome mementoes of his regard, which were all collected together in a box on this evening, with some money which her protector had given her on several occasions, and which she was now counting with her little

with a sense of gratitude; and all that I ask of Providence is, that with her maturer age it may ripen and not decay: gratitude, in whatever instance it appears, is praiseworthy; and where it is not, no virtue can be found."

"She is certainly the most fascinating little creature in the world," cried young Estenforth, resting his eyes for a moment on the deeply blushing cheeks of the countess of Rosenberg, who received from her sister a glance of the most expressive irony.

"Heaven be praised," cried she, in an under-tone of voice, not intended to reach the ear of her brother, "that tomorrow I shall be emancipated from a nursery! for this little moppet is become the idol of so many of you, that I vow and protest, Frank Estenforth, you are making yourself a perfect idiot. How excessively rejoiced I am to be clear of the incumbrance attached to the inconvenience of having a spoiled child under my

my care; for that, it is evident, she will soon be."

With many more concluding remarks, equally rancorous and malignant, the duchess closed her last evening's conversation at the Castle of Winterside, in which it was determined by the baron, that a considerable length of time should elapse before she should again become an invited guest; for the intolerable bent of her disposition had so completely disgusted him, that he was as much rejoiced in her departure, as affected by the loss of the sweet society of his sister Julia.

Not many persuasions were wanting, however, to comply with the repeated solicitations of the count and countess, to induce him to accompany them to town; and, in short, when his resolution was put to the test, he found he could not so easily part with his little founding as he expected, and he proposed to pass a few weeks in Harley-

street, that he might in consequence be more enabled to support her absence.

While these arrangements were making by the party above stairs, no less similar ones were taking place in the domestic establishment below; and Mrs. Snapp, the duchess's woman, being by far the most talkative, curious, and consequential of any, ventured to make her remarks at the supper-table, in the following manner, at the head of which Adam Oldstaff, according to his station, had always presided, and Lucretia, if she chose, had generally a place on his right hand; but as she had an insuperable objection to the society of London ladies' maids, and moreover was no way partial to Mrs. Snapp, she had lately given it up to Mrs. Bailey, retiring herself at an early hour to the nursery. Mrs. Snapp, therefore, seeing the object of her dislike absent, and imagining she had the whole field of oratory and eloquence

quence to herself, addressed her discourse to lady Julia's woman, on the opposite side of the table, first taking care to dispatch two glasses of cherry brandy, on pretence of having caught a violent sore throat—"My stars and garters, Mrs. Dandy, what do you think?"

"Why, lauk a mercy! how should I know?"

Mrs. Snapp simpered.

Mrs. Dandy, who, though a simpleton, was yet a very clever lady's maid, and by no means inclined to ill-nature, as most of them generally are—in short, the example of her lovely mistress had moulded her manners, though it could not her mind, and Mrs. Dandy was always civil, obliging, and good tempered.

"Why, I *purtests* and *declares*," cried Mrs. Snapp, blowing her nose in a cambric pocket-handkerchief, and ready to burst with the intended good joke she

was going to produce, "you would hardly believe what I am going to tell you."

"You are always thinking of something funny, that's for a certain truth," remarked Mrs. Dandy.

And Mrs. Snapp, not a little pleased with the compliment, and pursing up her leather lips, which exhibited a row and a half of snuff-coloured teeth, thus began—"I *vows* and *purtests*, that old crazy frump of a nurse is going right up to London with us. I'll be whipt, when I dressed the duchess to-day, I verily thought I should have split my sides with laughing. I say, Mrs. Dandy, what a quiz! there's a rum figure to stick up in Harley-street! Lauk! when she pops her head out of the carriage, with that there great roll on the top of her cap, and her starch stays as stiff as a poker, and her what d'ye call 'em gownd, standing an inch thick, how we folks will quiz her! for my part, I shall go in  
*stericks,*

*stericks*, I always laugh so at any thing funny—don't I, Mrs. Dandy?"

"I always said so, Mrs. Snapp," cried Mrs. Dandy; "so, lau! gracious me! Mrs. Lucretia is going up to London, be she? Well, I like her vastly; indeed I don't see how any body can dislike her—not I; and as to her *grownds*, and her thingumbob at the top of her head, why, lauk! its well enough for *sich* an old woman. And pray, ma'am, is the little dear going too? What a pretty *creter* she is! an't she, Mrs. Snapp?"

"A pretty fiddlestick's end!" uttered Mrs. Snapp, by no means pleased that her remarks on Lucretia had not created the mirth she expected; and determined to vent her spleen on something, she pertly added—"Pretty indeed! for my part, I *sees* nothing pretty in *sich* a forward little toad; I should be ashamed to be seen at a' bull-bait with her. I wonder, however, lady Julia can trouble her ladyship's head about other people's bastards;



bastards; for I knows what I knows—I know what my lady said in my hearing—I know a great deal, Mrs. Dandy; but its a bit of a secret, and I shan't tell: however, that's neither here nor there; the baron is a fine handsome man, and—you knows what, Mrs. Dandy."

Mrs. Dandy blushed (a very uncommon propensity with ladies of her calling, but she actually blushed) at the glaring effrontery of Mrs. Snapp, while she again simpered, and replied—"Gracious me! I knows nothing at all about it, Mrs. Snapp; you know it is no business of mine who the dear little child belongs to, though to be sure, there's nobody need be ashamed to own sich a beautiful angel; and if she is a *bastard*, why——"

Adam—the mild, the gentle, the complacent Adam, was now roused to a sort of resentment he was by no means addicted to—namely, calling ladies out of their  
their

their names ; but he had listened to the conversation of Mrs. Snapp, till he could no longer endure her jargon of impertinence ; and the word “ bastard ” being again repeated, he broke out in the following quaint manner—“ Silence, babbling women, I command you ! Never let me hear another disrespectful word, I charge you both ! As to you, *you she buzzard*,” and Adam turned to the terrified Mrs. Snapp, with a look that made her tremble, “ if you repeat the words I have just now heard, my lord the baron shall be immediately apprized of it. I am a peaceable old man, and would not willingly do an ill-natured turn to any one ; but I would have you remember, that the first duty of a servant is to speak respectfully behind the backs of their employers ; and if you have forgotten your duty, it is no reason why I should forget mine. I give you warning, Mrs. Butterfly—scandal is a brass trumpet, that won’t be suffered to blow

here, I promise you ; and envy is a foul weed—I don't like the taste of it, therefore it is always better to pluck it up by the roots at once; and I would have you to know, that when Lucretia and you and I meet, at the end of the last chapter, the clerk that gives out the text won't ask what coloured gown she has on, or whether her cap be an old or a new one. So good-night, Mrs. Frosty-face, and *reformation* to you."

And away, old Adam walked, leaving his fair auditors so far edified by his good advice, that they remained silent almost a whole quarter of an hour, the time they were precisely employed in papering their hair, washing their hands in almond paste, and beautifying their complexions; and when they retired to their chambers, the friendly hint given them by Adam Oldstaff was not forgot: they ceased talking until the first ray of light, breaking through the shutters, reminded them of their respective duties; and

and preparations for the journey were already far advanced, when they were summoned to attend on their mistresses.

## CHAPTER XV.

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THE carriages were ordered to be in readiness by seven o'clock. Lucretia and her young charge arose with the lark's first matin-song; all her wardrobe being curiously packed up, saving a rich brocade gown, which, to use the elegant term applied by Mrs. Snapp, actually did stand one inch thick from the ground, and in which she had now equipped herself for her journey; a large slouch, old-fashioned, black satin bonnet, and a cap with lace lappets, completed her attire; and when she appeared in the breakfast-hall, among the mo-

dem would-be fine ladies, it must be confessed Mrs. Timbertop exhibited somewhat of a grotesque appearance, and a universal titter would have prevailed, had not a look from Adam Oldstaff, perfectly understood by Mrs. Snapp, checked all approaches to risibility.

Mrs. Bailey had received orders from her master to investigate the wardrobe of the little foundling, as also to make what additions she thought necessary for the journey. The little straw bonnet, therefore, of Robertina, and her white muslin tippet, were exchanged for a blue beaver hat and feathers, and a satin spencer of the same colour, which, contrasting with one of the most beautiful complexions that nature ever gifted her partial favourites with, made her appear, with her bright auburn hair, one of the loveliest creatures in the world.

On her being sent into the drawing-room, her cherub-face and Ariel-figure drew forth the admiration even of  
the

the frigid duchess; and she declared now loudly, in the hearing of her brother, that the foundling was a little angel.

"Did you ever see so divine a face?" exclaimed she, turning to her nephew, who was minutely examining every lineament of Robertina's countenance.

"Never but one," cried he; "and that would puzzle the exquisite art of a Raphael, or the master-painting of Corregio, to imitate."

"Is she more fair than painting can express?" exclaimed the baron, smiling.

"Or youthful poets fancy when they love?" cried the count of Rosenberg. "Upon my soul, Frank, if your Iphigene is to be found on earth, we must behold this *rara avis* of perfection."

A blush of the deepest scarlet heightened the naturally fine complexion of young Estenforth, for lady Julia Rosenberg, who had been detained a few minutes in her dressing-room, at that pre-

cise moment made her appearance, and certainly it required but little discernment to discover who the *rara avis* was, the inspired Cymon not daring to steal one glance where the countess had taken her seat, looking, as she ever did, but on this morning most exquisitely lovely; nor ever were the similarity of features to the little foundling so striking, as when stooping down to untie the ribbands of Robertina's hat, the sweet semblance of both faces came in contact with each other; and my lord duke, who had hitherto sat silent, began to open his wise lips with the following observation:—

“ I vow and protest, lady Julia Rosenberg, when you produce this little mountain daisy in the society of the great world, she will be taken for one of your own transplanting. I never, positively, beheld so strong a resemblance of features in my existence.”

Happily for lady Julia's feelings, the  
opinion

opinion formed by the duchess was exactly *tout au contraire* to that of her lord and master, who declared that there was not the slightest approximation of features to her sister's.—“Like Julia? preposterous!” exclaimed she; “positively, my lord duke, when you discover likenesses again, pray oblige me by putting on a pair of spectacles—But *allons!* brother, when did you order the carriages?”

The baron looked at his watch.—“I will give your grace,” replied he, “exactly one half-hour and ten minutes to prepare, precisely the time that all will be ready for our cavalcade.”

The duchess whisked out of the room, squalling (for she could not sing) the Italian air of “*Oh, dolce consento,*” and my lord duke, calling for his favourite Rostrum, retired to his dressing-room, where, enveloped in pads and flannels, though in the warm month of August, he by degrees got on his travelling-clothes.

A different



A different sort of scene was taking place in Adam's little parlour below, of which lady Julia and her brother were silent spectators, but they retired evidently affected.

Lady Julia, from the very first moment of her arrival at the castle, had noticed Adam and Lucretia with the most distinguished marks of her affable and amiable disposition; and this morning, from the hands of the little foundling, she presented him with a gift of fifty pounds; as a token of her esteem, and his attention to Robertina.

Robertina looked wishfully in the face of lady Julia.—“Is all this for Adam,” cried she, “and none for nurse?” at the same moment that she deposited the contents of the leather purse in his lap.

The old man's heart overflowed with gratitude; his eyes spoke volumes; but he could not utter a sentence; but taking the foundling child in his arms, and bestowing on her a look, the remembrance

brance of which could not be erased from the memory of lady Julia, tears rolled down his furrowed cheeks—they dropped on the cherub-face of the smiling innocent, and thrice folding her to his aged breast, he appeared inwardly to invoke a blessing on her beauteous head; then bowing to lady Julia, respectfully retired.

Of his old fellow-servant and faithful companion, grown grey with himself in the service of the baron's family, he took a most solemn and affecting leave, reminding her, with great caution, that their meeting again on this side the grave was one of the uncertain events of life. He then, placing a curious, old-fashioned, enamelled gold ring on her finger, exhibiting a motto—"I never change but in death," and pressing her hand affectionately, bade her farewell.

Poor Lucretia could not stand with dry eyes to receive this last proof of Adam's

Adam's true and firm attachment. She sobbed out an adieu, as well as she could speak.

The duke and duchess were already seated in their carriage; young Estenforth occupied a seat in the baron's; the count and countess of Rosenberg's was the last that drew up, and they waited to receive Robertina and her nurse.

"God bless you, Adam!" whimpered Lucretia.

"And bless Robin too!" cried the foundling, stretching out her little arms to receive once more his farewell embrace.

Now Adam, though an old man, was no stoic.—"Angels of Providence preserve and bless you!" uttered he; but as he said this, tears gushed from his eyes, and unable to see the carriages depart, he shut himself in his little parlour till the distant trampling of the horses could be heard no more.

Sensibility! precious gem! the de-  
rision

riasion only of those whose minds are incapable of estimating thy worth! Painful, it is certain, to the possessor; but, how valueless is the heart without it! Throbs it with compassion? No! Glows it with gratitude? pants it with ardour? beats it with love?—Ah, no!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

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THE travellers and their respective suite did not reach town till an uncommonly late hour in the evening, it being an intense hot day, which, in all other respects, was delightful. It was not only a serenity which on this day so sweetly shone in the countenance of lady Julia, but a sort of grateful rapture that sat triumphantly on its beauteous throne, for towards the close of the evening Robertina fell asleep in her arms: it was then

then that, unseen by all, lady Julia clasped to her bosom a treasure she would not have resigned for the wealth of worlds, and a thousand times did she press her to that beating anxious heart, which had throbbed with so many fearful pangs, exclusively for her sake.

“ Julia, you will fatigue yourself,” cried the count; “ consider, my love, you are not accustomed to a nursery; give little Robin to her nurse.”

“ Oh! but indeed I do not feel her weight,” replied the countess gaily; “ she is as light as a feather.”

So saying, she rapturously kissed the bright glowing cheeks of the little sleeper, whose head rested on her bosom; but the fact was, that lady Julia’s heart was light as a feather, and it exhilarated the spirits of her enraptured husband.

Lucretia was a little sombre; but she was soon roused by the variety of objects which, on their near approach to London, everywhere met her curious eye.

When

When the carriages had proceeded as far as Hyde Park Corner, in passing through the turnpike, an elegant post-chariot, with grey horses, drove by, and the voice of young Estenforth was instantly heard recognizing and saluting his friend St. Vincent.

The count was equally desirous of speaking to him, and ordering the postillions to stop, he held a conversation of a few moments, which was elegantly supported by St. Vincent, though in a voice which evidently betrayed a perturbation and rapidity which the count was unable to guess the remotest cause for.

"I shall be glad to see you, St. Vincent, in Harley-street."

St. Vincent bowed, and the carriage drove off full speed.

Rosenberg then turned to lady Julia.—  
"That is the horrible black, my love," cried he, "that your sister describes to be the pest of society—that is St. Vincent."

"I do

"I do not perceive any thing horrible in his appearance; but you know Caroline is too much addicted to severity," replied the countess.

"She is addicted to something worse, my dearest creature," observed the count, "a treacherous tongue, and a malignant disposition. It is a shocking thing to look abroad for faults, when there are so many to be found at home; however, Julia, I shall invite St. Vincent to our house; believe me, on a nearer acquaintance, you will find him the most amiable of men: then, as to his complexion——"

"On that subject I should be sorry to have conceived the slightest prejudice," answered the countess. "I was not born in the West Indies, and, thank Heaven! do not inherit any of the illiberal opinions *there* imbibed, from the complexion either of blacks or whites."

"It is a most tyrannical country," cried the count. "It would seem, indeed, that the genial sun, under whose influence they

they breathe, serves but to inflame their hearts with cruelty towards their fellow-creatures; they are worse than the torrid zone—the sunny beam only scorchés, but the spirit of resentment burns in a *West Indian's breast* for ever."

As the duchess's carriage turned off for Portman-square, her grace put her head out of the window.—"Rosenberg!" exclaimed she, "tell Julia I shall expect to see her at Guissards; all the world will be there, and she must positively go, if it is only to behold Cymon and his Iphigene. Night, night! It is insufferably hot, and Mousy is so fatigued! the sweet creature has slept upon my velvet pelisse almost the whole of the journey."

With these concluding words, certainly of the highest import, her grace, whisking her head again into the carriage, it drove off.

"Well, my Julia," cried the count,  
"shall



"shall we really make ourselves ridiculous for once? Will you go to Guissard's?"

"In dominoes?" cried lady Julia.

"Oh, certainly not!" answered the count; "the spirit of a masquerade exists but in representation of assumed characters."

"I fear I should not be able to support a character," said lady Julia, "but the *one* that nature gave me: I can ill disguise feelings that are foreign to my heart."

"You are the most unfashionable creature, I grant you, in existence," cried the count; "yet for once, to oblige your Rosenberg——"

"I will strain a point," replied lady Julia.

"Dear obliging girl!" answered the count. "Well, my love, it is agreed that we both go to this same masquerade; but do you know, I have hit upon a strange stratagem: I should like to deceive Frank Estenforth of all things, in  
which

which you can assist me, if you please ; and by way of sport, suppose, Julia, you take the form of an Iphigene ? for you must know, that only last night I taxed Frank with the object of his secret idolatry, when he positively denied the charge.—‘ Not,’ cried I, ‘ if you were even to behold an Iphigene at Guissard’s masquerade ?’

‘ Not,’ cried he, ‘ if I were to behold her at the world’s end, could she, would she be my Iphigene.’

‘ This is a paradox, Frank,’ retorted I : ‘ you are certainly in love—deny the accusation if you can.’ He was silent ; but I rallied him so unmercifully on the subject, that I am determined to have further sport : do but assist me, Julia, and the young inamorato will soon be discovered.”

“ For what purpose should you make the discovery ?” cried the countess, blushing deeply.

“ Oh, seriously, I have no intention  
of

of wounding Frank's feelings, but merely an innocent frolic," replied the count, "in which it appears you are unwilling to become a party?"

Lady Julia was no longer able to oppose the wishes of the count, though by no means inclined to what he called sport; and, giving him her hand, she smilingly added—"Well, Rosenberg, tell me what part I am to perform in your comedy, and I will endeavour to make a tolerable actress."

"We will talk of that at supper," cried the count, and the carriage stopped at their elegant and spacious mansion in Harley-street.

CHAPTER XVII.  
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THREE days prior to the masquerade, the fashionable houses in Harley-street and Portman-square were crowded with elegant and splendid parties ; the duchess's house in particular presented a constant scene of bustle and confusion ; nor was count Rosenberg himself least anxious for the arrival of this important day. He had selected a most costly and magnificent dress, in which he was to represent the grand emperor of the Turks ; and an appropriate habit for the lovely Iphigene, which was simply beautiful, was brought home for lady Julia.

The duchess was to and fro constantly in Harley-street, and dying with curiosity to know what character her sister would assume, she herself intending to

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appear.

appear, as she had already intimated, as one of the "celestial genie." A dress, therefore, of the most costly materials, and in which delicacy was by no means a consideration, was contrived by one of the first and most expensive dress-makers in London, a French lady, who had spared no pains in the admirable talent she possessed of exhibiting to the eye of the astonished beholder what modesty should have taught her to conceal. The duchess, however, was delighted with the construction of her dress, and would, had the fates designed it, have appeared at the masquerade literally half naked.

Already had the evening previous to the eventful day arrived, and all hearts fluttered with expectation and delight. Lady Julia was not exempt from her share of anticipating an amusement she had never before witnessed; the duchess's spirits were exhilarated to the highest pitch; and the honourable Mr. Estenforth could not sleep the whole  
of

of the night, in imagining what would be the event of the following, a bird having whispered that somebody would be there—and that somebody ever intruded, whether sleeping or waking, on his most secret thoughts.

A select party of friends supped in Harley-street, to which St. Vincent had been most particularly invited by the count of Rosenberg; his carriage was announced at an early hour, and as he had never been formally introduced to lady Julia, the count, taking her by the hand, smilingly presented her to his friend, and a polite and elegant salutation passed between them, in which, as mistress of the mansion, she conducted herself with a sweetness and affability which invariably fascinated, gratified, and delighted her illustrious guests.

There was, however, spite of his efforts to conceal it, an evident embarrassment in the manner of St. Vincent each time that he addressed her, which some-

what increased as she familiarly entered into the spirit of conversation with him; and in his voice a sort of tremor, which seemed, in opposition to his feelings, to possess him, no otherwise remarked by the countess, than by the respectful diffidence usually marked in an entire stranger, who appeared conscious that nature had stamped his complexion with a colour against which the most illiberal prejudices had been conceived.

It was this circumstance alone that lady Julia, by the most *delicate* attentions, endeavoured to chase from the mind of St. Vincent all *such ungenerous prepossessions*; and it was not long before he *felt* the *full* force of a *conduct* which it was impossible for him not to rate in the standard of all human excellence.

His reserve gradually wore off, and he discovered a mind enlightened by a most superior *education*, manners most fascinating, and a sensibility most amiably

ably engaging; and, divested of his complexion, no competitor, in a graceful proportion of figure, could rival St. Vincent. He appeared, at this period, about five-and-thirty—had a remarkable fine set of teeth, and a peculiar softness in his voice, which, when his subject was affecting, long vibrated on the ear, and penetrated the heart.

It was in the course of the evening that a subscription having been raised for the relief of a poor man and his distressed family, to which it was well known St. Vincent had largely contributed, that it was alluded to, and the countess joining in the panegyric bestowed on his benevolence, St. Vincent suddenly fell into one of those deep reserves to which he was addicted, and he respectfully entreated lady Julia to be silent on the subject.

“Indeed, sir,” cried lady Julia, smiling, “you are unpardonably severe: why impose silence on a woman?”



There was a beauteous smile playing round the mouth of lady Julia as she uttered this, and St. Vincent, gazing on her with inscrutable expression, exclaimed—"Because that woman is lady Julia Rosenberg."

Whatever effect this sentence had on lady Julia, whether of pleasure or of pain, cannot be determined; but the tone of voice in which it was said instinctively made her turn round to examine the speaker. His dark penetrating and expressive eye was rivetted on her countenance.

Lady Julia trembled, she knew not why; a violent palpitation seized her heart—an ashy paleness overspread her complexion, and she was near fainting.

"Countess of Rosenberg, are you not well?" cried St. Vincent.

"A glass of water will revive me," she replied.

St. Vincent immediately procured it, when they were joined by the count, and  
many

many most intimate friends crowded round lady Julia, who in a few moments recovered her composure.—“I am really ashamed, my friends,” cried she, “of giving so much trouble—indeed I am much better; the heat overcame me, but I am now tolerably well; pray resume your seats.”

Meanwhile the duchess, at the other end of the room, and who was deeply engaged with a party at whist, now loudly exclaimed against affected sensibility.—“I positively protest,” cried she, “that my sister is the most vapourish creature in existence. I wish to God Rosenberg would put her into a glass-case, with a steam-engine to preserve her from these fainting fits! How horribly provoking it is to be disturbed in the middle of one’s rubber, with a hue and cry after the countess of Rosenberg! Frank, what’s trumps? You cannot tell, I perceive—No, no! your eyes are in another quarter: well, these violent

sympathies are uncommonly attractive. Valentine, why don't you come and finish your rubber?"

The baron obeyed, but not before he beheld his beloved sister recovering very rapidly from her temporary indisposition.

St. Vincent remained almost wholly silent for the rest of the evening, till, the masquerade being discussed, he again addressed lady Julia—"Do you venture, countess, to-morrow, to Guissard's?"

"Yes—the count has obtained my promise, and there is no retracting," answered she.

"Surely not," cried St. Vincent; "promises should be held sacred."

"I hope I have ever held and considered them so," said lady Julia, and a deep sigh escaped from her gentle bosom.

It reached but one ear—it penetrated but one heart—and *that* heart was St. Vincent's.

CHAPTER XVIII.  
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No one was stirring in Harley-street on the following morning, and the clock had scarcely struck six, when a loud ringing at the bell announced an uncommonly early visitor in the person of Mr. Ros-trum, who came express from the duchess, for her brother the baron to hasten to Portman-square, his grace the duke of Blaise not being expected to live. Ros-trum was immediately admitted to the chamber of the baron, to whom he communicated the following intelligence: That his grace had felt himself indisposed at four in the morning; and when his physician arrived, he pronounced him to be in the most extreme danger

—that he had since grown rapidly worse  
—that the duchess was in the utmost consternation and dismay, and Mr. Estenforth greatly alarmed.

The baron, without a moment's delay, accompanied Rostrum back to Portman-square, where he was immediately conducted to the duchess, who informed him, with the utmost calmness and composure, that the duke had just breathed his last, reviling him in the bitterest terms for having bequeathed to each of his servants the sum of ten pounds, and to his valet Rostrum the sum of five hundred pounds, the residue of his property, his title, and his estates, both landed and personal, devolving to his nephew, whom he affectionately styled in his will, "his darling boy;" and speaking of the duchess, it ran thus — "To Caroline Matilda, my wife, I bequeath," &c. &c. &c. as little indeed as he could possibly bequeath, seeming, as it were, to remind

remind her at his demise, of the large sums she had squandered away in the early part of their marriage.

The rage and mortification of the duchess exceeded *all bounds* when she found herself mistress only of a tenth part of what she had expected; and a flood of tears came most seasonably to her relief, at the moment that her nephew, now his grace the duke of Blaise, entered her apartment—"So, sir," cried she, "I wish you joy of your title and estates, for your uncle has thought proper to leave me a beggar, for the glory, I suppose, of having you and your *brats* to live to tyrannize over the feelings of his distressed widow." Then quickly drying her eyes, she continued, for his grace did not choose to interrupt her—"But pray inform me when you are disposed to come and take possession of my house, my furniture, my wearing apparel, my carriage, jewels, &c. &c.—when do you turn me out?"

The young man remained perfectly silent—it was impossible to utter a sentence in reply to such unmerited and virulent abuse; but the baron, shocked and disgusted at such manifest symptoms of a most vicious disposition and malevolent heart, could no longer stay in her presence, and took his departure with the following words:—"Caroline, you are altogether one of the most unfeeling, indelicate, and malevolent creatures in existence! When you can arrive at any tolerable degree of decency, I will be glad to acknowledge you as my sister; till then you must excuse my absence," and the baron left the house.

However, it is not known what specific remedy the young duke applied to the wounded feelings of the disconsolate widow, but she wore her weeds, in a few weeks after the interment of her husband, with a tolerable share of composure, at the same time that she had exhibited

hibited the most extravagant symptoms of outward despair. "So mourn'd the dame of Ephesus her love;" for had the "soldier" told his tale, he would have been a "thriving wooer."

It was authentically reported, that the liberality of the young duke to the widow of his late uncle was beyond the most sanguine expectations of the rapacious duchess, and silenced that tongue which nothing else could have checked from its impertinence.

One year of uninterrupted happiness from this period flew swiftly past. The widow was trying to catch at another dukedom; the baron had returned to solitude and Winterside Castle; the young duke of Blaise was gone on a continental tour, in which he was accompanied for a short time by the count of Rosenberg, who was hourly expected to return: meantime the little foundling, like a beautiful rosebud, was ripening



ing into maturity under the auspices of lady Julia.

Since her arrival in London she had a governess to attend her; and though lady Julia gave Lucretia every authority over her as a nurse, yet she was particularly careful that the first rudiments of education should not be neglected. But the lively spirits of Robertina could scarcely be held within bounds; she had a genius for every thing, and so rapid was the improvement of her growth and beauty, that lady Julia, gazing on her with impassioned fondness, would sometimes contemplate the features of her fair face till her eyes were bedewed with tears.

Robertina was one morning seated beside lady Julia, when St. Vincent came in. He had often begged permission to see the little foundling, and now a fair opportunity presented itself; for lady Julia, from motives of extreme delicacy, had

had hitherto been prevented from introducing Robertina, fearing that her natural vivacity might innocently induce her to make some remarks on the colour of his complexion; she therefore whispered to her when presenting her to St. Vincent. But what was lady Julia's surprise and astonishment to perceive a convulsive shivering seize his whole frame as he gazed on the features of Robertina, and an emotion which almost melted him into tears!—"Oh! moment of unutterable rapture!" cried he; "yet, ah! how mingled with the torments of despair! Angelic creature!" continued he, snatching the little foundling with inexpressible fondness to his breast, "art thou then the child of——"

"Whose child?" screamed out the countess. "Speak, St. Vincent, mysterious man! whose child said you this infant was?"

St. Vincent seemed to hold a strong  
conflict

conflict with his feelings, while he answered—"The child of Providence—is she not?" and resigning her to the arms of lady Julia, he remained silent.

It was not without emotion that lady Julia remarked the agitation of St. Vincent: she had indeed remarked it on more occasions than one, but now it appeared more singular than she could account for; and there were certain times when she could not divest herself from thinking that he was acquainted with mysteries she wished not to be divulged; yet from what source it was utterly impossible to tell.

Count Rosenberg had been absent now nearly six weeks, when the baron one evening unexpectedly arrived in Harley-street.—"I am come, Julia," cried he, "positively come to steal you and Robin away for a few weeks: indeed you must go, for I have company at Winter-side, I assure you. Lord Montalbin has  
honoured

honoured me with a visit; he is an invalid, and is accompanied by his sister, lady Almeria Morden."

Lady Julia had already more than half complied with her beloved brother's solicitation; and the bell being rung for Robertina, she instantly made her appearance, and the delighted baron, gazing on her for a few moments, could scarcely believe it was the little unsophisticated rustic, who, but a twelve-month since, had emerged from the solitude of Winterside Castle.

Without any restraint on her feelings, however, she flew into the arms of her protector; then looking at lady Julia with the sweetest archness of expression, exclaimed—"Goodman is Robin's goodman, is not he? Governess says little girls must not kiss gentlemen; but pray, goodman, are you a gentleman? and is Adam a gentleman? because Adam used to kiss me very often, and Robin loves Adam dearly."

"Oh

"Oh yes, my love—you may give Adam as many kisses as you please," cried lady Julia; "but your governess is right; you must not kiss every gentleman who comes to see me, except the baron, who, I have told you, is my brother, and the count—he is my husband, you know, and Adam is an old faithful servant, and——"

"Then pray, ma'am," cried Robertina, with great anxiety, "who is that gentleman that gives me so many pretty playthings, who looks so black in the face, yet for *all that* is so good-natured? I was so afraid of him at first, you cannot think; but now I don't mind him one bit, for he calls me his own dear little Robin; and, don't tell governess, but he hugs and kisses me so!"

At this moment St. Vincent entered the room, and cordially saluted the baron, who, laughing heartily, related the account that Robertina had given of herself.

"Sweet

"Sweet innocent!" exclaimed St. Vincent; "may that ingenuousness which seems already to be peculiarly her characteristic continue to the end of her life!"

A deep sigh, spite of the struggles he made to oppose it, at these words escaped from the bosom of St. Vincent, not unobserved by lady Julia, who, retiring with Robertina, gave her brother an ample opportunity of discovering in St. Vincent traits of a most amiable disposition, an enlightened understanding, with the advantage of a most superior education; from whom he learned, that, although but a few years emancipated from an island in the *West Indies*, where he had acquired the immense property he possessed, a European had given him birth, and that he had gained all the advantages of education on European land—"Where my mother, at least," cried he, "inhaled her first breath; and happy were my days, till——" St.

*Vincent*

*Vincent* paused ; at length continued—  
“ Believe me, baron, I have passed over a fiery ordeal, with the conflict of feelings it was impossible to subdue—injuries I could not redress—ties I could not relinquish—objects I could not forget. My life would furnish a romance, were it once disclosed.”

“ Life is a romance itself,” answered the baron ; “ what need of fiction to paint the countless woes that wretches feel? Books may indeed furnish us with the theory, but the most useful lesson we learn is surely from experience. I am going to take my sister and little Robin for a few weeks,” continued the baron, “to Winterside Castle : will you, St. Vincent, join us in a family-party? Come, seek not excuses—I will not be denied.”

St. Vincent hesitated, at length replied—“ Your commands are absolute; yet, ah ! baron of Winterside, you know not the goading thorn which, wander where-soever

soever I will, rankles in this breast! Could I indeed forget, present felicity might mitigate past sorrows; but memory is too faithful—it recalls too minutely maddening scenes of bliss never to be obliterated. Almighty Powers! have I not been a husband? and am not I now a father? Oh! lost for ever is that wife, and lost for ever is that child, the pledge of faithful love—the fruit of honourable connexion! My infant is lost! my wife is——”

“Is what?” cried the baron. “St. Vincent, you alarm me—you fill my soul with uncontrollable emotion. You have a noble heart; I cannot doubt your honour. I myself have been deceived: perfidious woman is the cause!”

“Not so,” uttered St. Vincent. “I loved an angel! She whom I love is an angel still—the saints in heaven breathe not a purer soul!—I loved, in dotage loved; we were married by sanction of the holy church—the hand of destiny arrested,



arrested, by a fatal blow, the happiness too glorious to last—the cruel mandate of imperious necessity separated me from the idol of my soul! I left her—a wretched captive on the coast of Africa, escaped from hard bondage, miraculously saved from shipwreck, the first intelligence my heartbroken spirit received, was to hear my wife was——”

“ Brother, I attend your summons,” cried lady Julia; “ coffee has been ready this half-hour, but you are so complete a gossip, that I am come on purpose to tell you that I shall wait no longer.”

Lady Julia uttered these words gaily as she entered the room; but, shocked and surprised at the uncommon agitation she beheld in St. Vincent, and the emotion of her brother, she found herself unable to pronounce another sentence, but gazing on each, ventured to demand an explanation by looks, for she remained silent.

St. Vincent was the first to recover  
himself

himself—"Your brother and I," cried he, "have been endeavouring to resolve certain planets; but we are both bad astronomers, I find, and must leave the rest to sir Isaac Newton."

"St. Vincent is right, Julia," said the baron; "we can account for the changes in the moon, but we have been trying to explore a planet the most inexplicable."

"And what planet is that?" cried lady Julia.

"Woman!" answered the baron, and led lady Julia to the door of the drawing-room.

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